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OF AMERICA

ARTICLE OF CONFEDERATION

THOMAS W. LADD, JR.

Author of "The Constitution of the United States"

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BY THOMAS WILLIAM LAMONTAGNE

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THE SIXTH



# VINDICIÆ SYMBOLICÆ:

OR,

## A TREATISE

ON

CREEDS, ARTICLES OF FAITH,

AND

ARTICLES OF DOCTRINE.

BY THOMAS WILLIAM LANCASTER, M.A.

VICAR OF BANBURY, AND FORMERLY BAMPTON LECTURER.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

ΧΡΗ ΤΟΙΓΑΡΟΤΝ 'ΗΜΑΣ ΘΕΩ, ΠΡΟΣΠΙΠΤΕΙΝ, ΛΕΓΟΝΤΑΣ· “ΦΩΤΙ-  
ΣΟΝ ΤΟΤΣ ΟΦΘΑΛΜΦΤΣ ΜΟΥ, ΜΗ ΠΟΤΕ 'ΥΠΝΩΣΩ ΕΙΣ ΘΑΝΑ-  
ΤΟΝ.” ΤΟ ΓΑΡ ΤΗΣ ΟΡΘΟΤΗΤΟΣ ΤΩΝ 'ΙΕΡΩΝ ΔΟΓΜΑΤΩΝ ΑΠΟΛ-  
ΙΣΘΕΙΝ ΕΙΗ ΑΝ 'ΕΤΕΡΟΝ ΟΥΔΕΝ, ΠΛΗΝ 'ΟΤΙ ΣΑΦΩΣ ΤΟ 'ΥΠ-  
ΝΟΤΝ ΕΙΣ ΘΑΝΑΤΟΝ.—CYRIL. ALEX. IN SANCTUM SYMBOLUM.

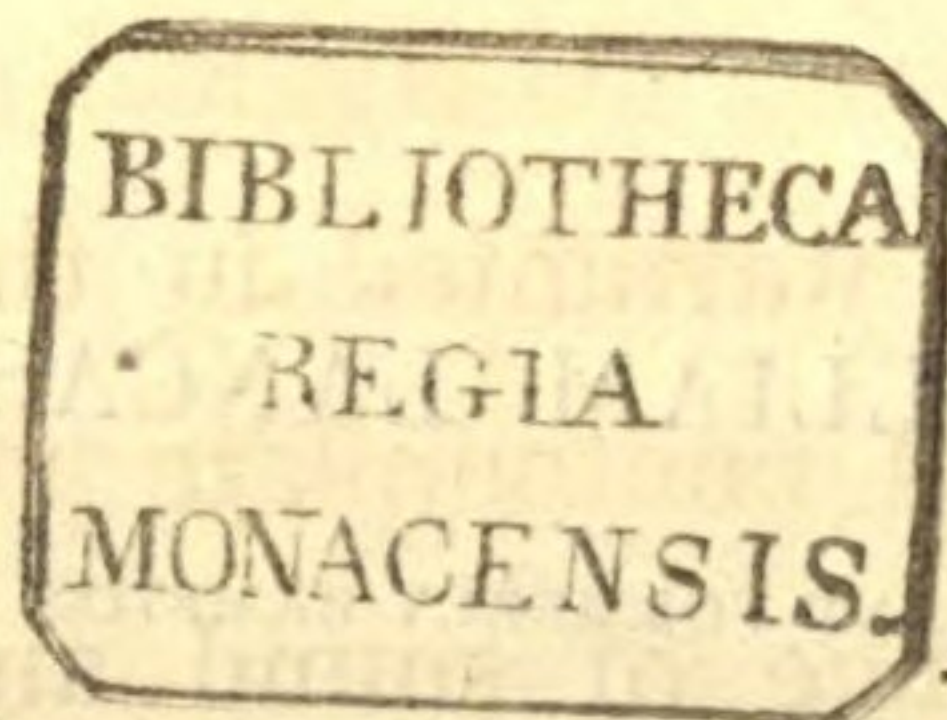
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1848.







TO THE  
REVEREND VAUGHAN THOMAS, B.D.

MY DEAR SIR,

By means of long friendship I have learned with full assurance the very high estimation, which is due to your theological judgment: I feel myself also fully warranted in that profound respect, with which I contemplate your resolute and unwavering defence of sound and scriptural doctrine. Under the influence of these sentiments, it is my strong desire that the treatise, now submitted to the public, should, in this form, be more specially submitted to you. I beg to connect with it a record of sincere gratitude, and of great consideration for rectitude and learning.

T. W. LANCASTER.

*Oxford, April, 1848.*



My feelings of long friendship I have  
not forgotten, and I am sure that your  
kindness will be to you the most valuable  
I have ever known. I have watched in that precious  
heart, with which I contemplate your resolute  
and unwavering belief of good and righteous  
doings. Under the influence of these sentiments,  
it is my strong desire that the treatise, now sub-  
mitted to the public, should, in this form, be more  
especially submitted to you. I beg to connect with  
it a record of sincere gratitude, and of great con-  
sideration for rectitude and learning.

Yours very truly,  
T. W. LANCASTER.

Oxford, April 1818.



## PREFACE.

---

THE present subject had long ago engaged my attention, by the deep interest to which, considered merely in itself, it was entitled. There soon arose a strong additional reason for the prosecution of it. This was afforded by various publications of the time: which, if destitute of merit, were not inconsiderable in their influence. For they conveyed sentiments, at once pregnant with alarming mischief, and which seemed to be every day gaining fresh ground of diffusive popularity. Being myself fully convinced, respecting the loud clamour against ecclesiastical formularies, that it was, on the most charitable view, entirely prompted by false suppositions, and that it owed its whole encouragement to unexamined prejudices: it could not be improper, and I hope it was not presuming, if there occurred to me a propriety of endeavouring to explain a subject, which was little understood, and on which truth



was vitally important, both to religion, and to every sublunary blessing which religion creates. However slender may be the value of the present effort, it is nevertheless my confident persuasion respecting the truth of the case, from whatever quarter it may dawn upon the mind; that it will, when seen and understood, never resist the following conclusion: namely, that criterions of doctrine are not only prescribed by holy writ, but also essentially required for the protection of Christianity.

In the earlier part of the following pages will be seen the plan which I formed for my undertaking: and it will also appear subsequently, that this plan has not been completed; a circumstance which has arisen from reasons, urgent in themselves, but unnecessary for the reader's attention. I have thus been influenced to publish my work without delay in its present form. I feel it however right that I should explain, both the measure of its present completion, and also the particulars, in which the execution is short of the design.

With regard to what is now completed: I would hope, that it will be found to embrace all that is needful, first, towards an exposition of the general subject; and, secondly, towards a satisfactory confutation of the false principles, on which our Creeds and Articles have been impugned. To make



myself better understood I would say, that all such objections are capable of this short answer : “ Our articles of faith and doctrine were not intended for the use which your objection supposes, but for a very different purpose ; and this, the real purpose of such formularies, is of a character, under which they are not only lawful, but even essential to religion, and imperatively required.” If this answer is true, it is conclusive : and I hope, that the present volume has at least been carried far enough, to substantiate this truth. With respect then to this important point, I hope that my work may be admitted for complete : complete, I mean, with relation to the strict exigences of the subject, not with relation to the limits of desirable extension. My reader, I hope, will admit the validity of the distinction. It is something to confute error by establishing a sound theological conclusion : and it might be still more desirable, that this conclusion should be carried out into ulterior consequences and application : but it is certainly permitted to do the former of these, even under the want of opportunities for the latter.

I must now advert to deficiencies. They are such indeed with relation to my own outline of purpose, but not, I would hope, with reference to the leading requisite of such a treatise. In general I may say that, had I completed the Fourth



Part; I hope I should thus, in following the stream of history, have deduced additional matter of salutary application. This same line of observation would probably have yielded further opportunities for confuting misrepresentations, which have tended to provoke hatred and resistance to ecclesiastical authority.

Having been enabled to proceed thus far; I am not without a hope of realizing these benefits, by carrying out my full design. It will, on this view, be proper to add to the Fourth Part, a body of Supplementary Remarks. In these it is purposed to insert any additional proofs and illustrations, which have been previously referred to, or which may seem advantageous to the general object. This mode of introducing such materials will, it is hoped, be found preferable to the risk of perplexing the general thread of argument, by inserting them in the body of the treatise.

These points of avowed deficiency I am anxious to supply in a second volume: of which the materials are to a considerable extent prepared. But there are other points, in which addition may be desirable, although the work, even independently of them, might not be insufficient to its professed aim.

With regard to the Three Creeds, it will be seen, that a very high and commanding authority is here<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> See page 135.



claimed for the whole of their contents. I am however aware that there is one clause, respecting which I must expect, that this claim will be either denied, or disputed; or at least, that its validity will not in all cases be understood. It is therefore my present purpose to add a special dissertation, grounded upon extensive research, with the hope of evincing, respecting this article of our Christian profession, that it stands upon the same basis of authority and necessity with all the others. The article of which I speak is that, in which the Church affirms the Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son. Meanwhile, they who may require conviction on this head, will take my argument with this abatement; and will consider, that such argument is none the less conclusive to that extent, which it is admitted to embrace.

I will now express myself relating to the purpose of another separate dissertation. This, though not essential to my main design, is calculated, as I would hope, to bring to it much increase of utility. It will relate to the subject of *Baptismal Creeds*. Some divines have confidently affirmed, what others however have not admitted; that these creeds, being, at first, the *only* liturgical creeds, expressed nothing more than a belief in the Holy Trinity: being also maintained respecting this primeval form that all additions were subsequently made, only



occasions when, by the appearance of heresies, they became needful for preserving an uncontaminated faith. Now the aim of this purposed dissertation is to shew, that this is certainly the case. To this end I have collected large materials of evidence, which seem to me decisive. These materials I am desirous of placing in a clear light of distinct representation; together with a careful balancing of the weight, which belongs separately to every single testimony, and collectively to the whole amount. This, I believe, has never been done: yet I cannot but think, that it would be greatly beneficial in two respects: first, as imparting a salutary light to my leading subject; secondly, towards establishing the true sense of holy writ in the minds of those, who may have erred or doubted relating to the right faith of the Trinity. My present language will be better understood after perusing the twelfth chapter of the First Part of this treatise.

In stating my obligations to foregoing writers, I would express a hope, that all have been duly acknowledged. There is one however, whom I would more particularly name: I mean, Mr. Rogers, the author of an approved treatise on the Church. Of some considerable principles and arguments which characterize my own work, the expression had been committed to paper,



before I had seen Mr. Rogers's publications :<sup>b</sup> when I did see them, I was much pleased by finding, in several remarkable coincidences, that I had held an unconscious unison of judgment with this solid theologian. In one particular however I have confessedly formed my judgment under his guidance :<sup>c</sup> and in another,<sup>d</sup> I can hardly doubt that, if I have reasoned well, I have, even without reiterating his opinions, done it all the better for having read his valuable work. Should it be permitted to me to complete my purposed second volume ; I am anxious to produce as many instances as I can, of agreement with the sentiments put forth in this treatise : and on the whole I am very desirous, that my work should be as little as possible chargeable with originality. For if, with regard to the matter of Christian doctrine, we consider the character of original views ; they can be no other than those of either delusion or imposture ; and if, in point of argument and illustration, our sentiments should really be the native product of our own reflection ; they will always to a well disposed mind appear the more valuable to religion, by having, from greater and wiser men, the sanction of a foregoing concurrence.

<sup>b</sup> Those referred to are, "A Discourse of the Visible and Invisible Church of Christ ;" and "A Review" of that Discourse.

<sup>c</sup> See p. 384 of this treatise.

<sup>d</sup> Part I. Chap. 3.



Among living friends, I wish to express the deepest obligation to the Reverend Vaughan Thomas, B.D. : from whose invaluable friendship and great erudition I have, during the whole progress of printing this work, derived the kindest aid and the most substantial benefit.

Respecting the first occasion which led to the present result of investigation, it may be not improper if I state, that it arose from some remarks in Wall's History of Infant Baptism. By these remarks my attention was much engaged and deeply interested ; and they thus furnished the originating impulse to my undertaking.

On the subject of these pages my thoughts and my researches have been much engaged, almost ever since a time when, by a total failure of health, I became disqualified for more active duties. As to the fruit of labour thus resulting from events ; there was little prospect of my being ever able to submit it to the public : but I am bound with gratitude to make it known, that this impediment has been removed by a benefactor, whose name will never be known by me, and from whom there was transmitted the means of expenditure required for the purpose.

Should my work in any instance be honoured with such regard, as to raise a wish for an extension of it : it must be well understood, that I do not



place myself under any engagement to that effect : the present prospect of such extension being clouded with peculiar difficulties and uncertainties, in addition to the nature, universally precarious, of future things, which can be visible only to the Disposer of events. With respect then to references (which will sometimes occur) to Supplementary matter ; the reader will consider them as the marks of an imperfect treatise, which may perhaps be doomed always to remain such ; as indications of subjects, on which it is confessed that enlargement would be desirable, but with regard to which, and to all other desirable additions, the author is not, even humanly speaking, under any pledge, but only anxious to exert his best efforts of doing justice to a very momentous subject.







## CORRIGENDA.

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| PAGE. | LINE.          |                                                                                              |
|-------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 33    | . . . 1        | for <i>heresies of which</i> read <i>heresies, which</i>                                     |
| 39    | note <i>l.</i> | for 67 read 68.                                                                              |
| 63    | . . . 31       | for <i>these heretical doctrines</i> read <i>those &amp;c.</i>                               |
| 65    | . . . 14       | for <i>Marcellus,</i> read <i>Marcellus</i>                                                  |
| 84    | . . . 2        | for <i>contended</i> read <i>contented</i>                                                   |
| 95    | . . . 21       | for <i>that, heretical</i> read <i>that heretical</i>                                        |
| 108   | . . . 24       | for <i>their</i> read <i>there</i>                                                           |
| 215   | . . . 23       | for <i>contradiction :</i> read <i>contradiction.</i>                                        |
| 247   | . . . 5        | for <i>reference the</i> read <i>reference to the</i>                                        |
| 254   | . . . 3        | The period ought to end with the word <i>offered,</i> and the following words to be omitted. |
| 396   | . . . 11       | Insert marks of quotation before the reference <i>f.</i>                                     |
| 421   | note <i>m.</i> | Insert <i>the</i> before <i>Bullarium.</i>                                                   |
| 440   | . . . 1        | for <i>Charles</i> read <i>James</i>                                                         |

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

The Abbé Fleury's Ecclesiastical History, and Mons. Fabre's Continuation, are both referred to under one common form. The work of the Abbé extends to the end of the 100th book of the entire publication.



OF THE ORIGINAL PRINCIPLES AND DOCTRINES  
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

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## INTRODUCTION.







## INTRODUCTION.

VINCENTIUS LIRINENSIS has a passage, which may be profitably applied to the introduction of my present subject. Of this representation I will gladly avail myself: at the same time, since the authority which I thus claim, is not merely that of an individual, but of truth and reason; I shall not scruple so to vary the statement, as may the better adapt it to my purpose. In this instance, and indeed, probably in other similar ones, my practice will thus be agreeable to that, observed by Cicero with reference to the earlier teachers of philosophy: whom he does not feel himself bound to follow with the close adherence of a translator, but is contented to profit by their materials, according to the measure of his judgment and inclination. It will of course appear, that the same method will be unsuitable to any occasions, which may call for rigid proof and decisive authority; and to which therefore, no



record or quotation ought otherwise to be applied, than in the form of exact and careful allegation.

“The Church of Christ is a watchful and faithful guardian, of the truth which has been entrusted to her. In this character she will endure neither change, nor diminution, nor addition : she will neither retrench what is necessary, nor adopt what is superfluous : she will neither surrender her own, nor admit what does not belong to her. If, owing to new emergencies of controversy and error, the tenets of the earlier time are expressed in a manner, not sufficiently accurate and perfect for the present need ; she will improve them to greater degrees of exactness, and will speak in language, more express and positive than the necessity of former ages had required. But if these tenets have come down in a form of adequate statement and of authoritative confirmation : she will jealously guard and preserve them to the utmost point of time, at which their employment may be required. Such is the use of the decrees of Councils, such is their design : that true doctrines, after being once attacked, should henceforth be better urged, attended to, and explained. Such is the aim of the Catholic Church, when, in the adoption of these decrees, she prescribes the articles of our faith and the terms of our communion with the saints. It was by the fictions and innovations of heresy, that these decrees were called forth : and the object of them has been, to fix, by written words and authoritative formularies, that which, however true and however needful, had previously come down by tradition, and been current only in unauthoritative discourse ; and thus to



assist the true comprehension of the faithful, by marking, with an exact propriety of new expressions, a tenet of faith which in itself is *not* new.”<sup>a</sup>

It is the design of this treatise to illustrate, in agreement with the foregoing representation, the use of Creeds and of Formularies of Doctrine. Of such an endeavour, the importance is strongly felt by the present writer : to whom it seems, that there have discovered themselves, in the present age, with respect to this subject, an excessive ignorance, a strong confidence of error, and a bold temerity of judgment ; and that the highest interests, belonging not only to the eternal, but also to the temporal condition of mankind, have thus been alarmingly endangered.

These forms of doctrine have arisen in almost every age of the Church. Now it is a principle maintained at large by the author, to whom I have just referred, that the novelty of a doctrine is in itself a proof of its falsehood : and this principle, in its general relation to a faith which has been once for all delivered, it is not easy to dispute. How, then, may it be argued, can you prevent this censure from recoiling on the very doctrines which you desire to vindicate ? for these doctrines are set forth in forms of human composition, some of which have come into existence at a late period.

Let it, then, be considered, respecting these forms, that it is a false notion to imagine, that they were primarily designed, as a spontaneous declaration of truth ; or as a basis of necessary doctrine ; or as a summary of certain selected principles,

<sup>a</sup> Vinc. Lir. Commonitorii, c. 23.



which, as being more important, it was thus endeavoured to make more prominent. If we view them with regard only to their legitimate introduction and proper use; which are the only things I now seek to justify: it may safely be affirmed, in contradiction of this great and perilous mistake, that they have derived their being and character from circumstances wholly extraneous to the essence of the faith, and from events which acted, from without, on the manner of its transmission through progressive ages: in other words, they have been occasioned by changes of time, and by novelties of opinion.

It will be a material help to a true comprehension of their character, if we view them in comparison with the general doctrine of Christianity. This doctrine, in its full extent, was by our blessed Lord, entrusted with the first apostles and their successors, to be by them, impartially as well as faithfully dispensed, for the enlargement and government of his Church. It is also delivered in the holy Scriptures, which are at all times the standard and criterion of sound doctrine. These are concurrent methods of perpetuating evangelical truth. It is not required, that all Christian instruction should be imparted in the very words of Scripture, and in no other; for this would shut the door against all explanation and practical application, and even against the statement of evidence in support of Christianity itself: but it is required, that all Christian teaching should have the warrant of Scripture, and should be capable of proof from it. Scripture is an appointed security against the



corruption of that, which was to be transmitted by men. Thus, the gospel of St. Luke is declared to have been given as a means of certainty, respecting matters, which had been previously taught by oral tradition. Thus also, the notion of a criterion and a security seems to be involved in the term canon; which, from very ancient time, was applied to denote the collective body of authentic Scriptures: for this word, which signifies a *rule of measurement*, cannot, in its native force, so properly describe the primary teaching of the faith, as it does the standard, by which that teaching is to be examined and tried.

But with regard to *creeds*, the case is different. So far as they contain a general acknowledgment of the whole faith; they must have been from the beginning of the Church. But so far as, together with this general acknowledgment, they combine particular doctrines of that faith; their use and intention is peculiar and restricted. Their origin was such as I will now describe, and the proper employment of them has always been of the same kind.

When, from time to time, there arose among professing Christians, false and pernicious doctrines, the forms of sound words were drawn up for the purpose of denying the falsehood and repelling the mischief. It was, consequently, not a spontaneous enunciation of truth, but a contradiction of falsehood; which they had in view. The propositions embraced in them were framed with an occasional design. If error had not arisen, these propositions would never, in this conspicuous and emphatic way,



have been presented to the world ; but would have been left in the body of the Scriptures and in the general doctrine of the Church, to be interpreted agreeably to that judgment, which the understandings of men, under the guidance of Divine Grace, might exercise upon them.

The foregoing remarks may serve as a general outline of the present treatise. This brief representation I shall endeavour to substantiate by proof, to explain by illustration, and to follow up with that kind of application, which may serve to dispel error, to solve difficulty, and to determine important questions. With these views, and according to the following plan, I shall distribute my work into four parts.

In the first part, formularies of faith and doctrine will be considered, with a view of explaining and establishing the origin, the proper design, and the right interpretation of them.

The second will be employed in exposing the falsehood and mischief of contrary opinions.

The third will be employed upon the resolution of questions and the deduction of consequences.

The fourth will carry us back into an historical retrospect. Respecting this I will remark, before I proceed, that it will have in view the following benefits ; namely, the confirmation of truth, to be derived from more abundant evidence ; the illustration of a salutary influence connected with an adherence to right principles relating to this subject ; and the exposure of practical mischief resulting from the substitution of wrong ones. The importance of this examination will be better seen, when



it is considered ; that the true and profitable comprehension of this subject is, according to its inherent nature, to be obtained, not from subtle and wire-woven argumentations, but from matters of plain and admitted record, and from such inferences, thus obtained, as common men, of plain understandings, are fully able to estimate. It will also carry with it a very important consequence with respect to the Church of England. For it will thus appear, that this church, in her articles of communion, does not impose on the faith of her members, one sentence, which has not, as a requirement necessary in order to salvation, been sanctioned by the whole and undivided Church of Christ. If this be true, it is vitally important : and it is certain, that its truth must be made apparent, not by any scholastical exercise of a disputatious talent, but by a humble and attentive consideration of facts. This fourth part will also aim, by intermingled remarks, at realizing the proper fruit and advantage of the review which it will embrace. This will be done agreeably to the observation of Livy, respecting the leading benefit of history : so that after reviewing that which has been right in purpose and salutary in event, we may desire to adopt it into our own practice, and that we may in like manner shun the contrary. It will be well for us thus to reason and to act, for the edifying of the body of Christ. For though it be true, that the Roman historian points to a sublunary good, and indicates a benefit, which is merely political and secular : still the principle is in itself properly applicable to the Christian Church ; which



may in this, as well as other respects, be properly regarded agreeably to Saint Augustine's designation, as the commonwealth of God.

Having thus unfolded the nature of my undertaking, I pray humbly and earnestly to God, that if my purpose be good in his eye, he would permit me to accomplish it; that he would restrain me from saying any thing, which, in the day when every idle word is to be accounted for, may be matter of charge against me; and that he would prosper my humble labour to the edification of his church.



PART I.

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ON THE ORIGIN,  
PROPER DESIGN,  
AND RIGHT INTERPRETATION,  
OF FORMULARIES  
OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE.



PART I.

ON THE ORIGIN,

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## CHAPTER I.

### ON THE ORIGIN OF CREEDS.

WHEN our Blessed Lord sent forth his apostles to evangelize the world, they were commanded to go and make disciples of all nations: they were to baptize their converts in the name of the blessed Trinity. He that believed their preaching was to be admitted by baptism into covenant with God: he who, in despite of their preaching, continued an infidel, was to be condemned. The covenant thus propounded was one, which stipulated, on the part of man, repentance, and on the part of God, remission of sins.

It is thus quite plain, that *some* creed must, from the very beginning, be required of all who came to be baptized. For the word *creed* merely denotes, *that which a man professes to believe*: and the new converts could not, without some such profession, be qualified for this covenant.

This creed was, at the first, very short and simple. It appears to have declared nothing more than an acknowledgment of the Divine Mission of Jesus Christ: there being implied and understood, in that acknowledgment, an admission of the whole doctrine which our Lord had ratified by his au-



thority: the truth of the doctrine being an obvious consequence, flowing from the Divine authority of the teacher. Such is the form of the earliest creed which we have upon record. It is thus that St. Luke relates to us the baptism of the eunuch by Philip the deacon. "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch: and he baptized him."<sup>a</sup> It thus appears, that the creed of the eunuch consisted of these few simple words: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

This occurs to us as a fact in the history of the early church. The view of fact, thus obtained, is confirmed, if I mistake not, by positive declaration; which shews, that what was thus done, was, with respect to that occasion, all that the will of God required. For St. John says, in words which are the more remarkable, from being exactly coincident with the language of the foregoing short creed: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."<sup>b</sup> Here is a high state of privilege: that God should dwell in us and we in God, is a condition, that plainly involves in it the promise of being saved: and when it appears, that all this is consequent on a right belief relating to the person of our Saviour;

<sup>a</sup> Acts viii. 36—38.

<sup>b</sup> 1 John, iv. 15.



it is plain, that such belief must comprehend a belief of all that he taught. If the messenger of God was veracious, the message must be true: the recognition of authority in the teacher, was a recognition of truth in the doctrine. The confession thus denoted, must, like the faith of the eunuch, have embraced a reception of the doctrine, as a consequence, folded up in the acknowledgment of the teacher. Agreeably to this view ought we also to understand those words which were spoken by our Lord himself, and which carry with them strong additional authority to the principle now affirmed: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."<sup>c</sup> It is here plainly understood, that he who thus knows Jesus Christ, not only admits the authority of Christ, but also embraces his doctrine.

<sup>c</sup> John xvii. 3.



## CHAPTER II.

## ON THE ORIGIN OF ARTICLES OF FAITH.

**W**E have seen, how very brief and simple was the form of a primitive creed. But it was impossible that this simplicity should long continue.

It is not indeed unlikely, that this creed may have outlived, but a very short time, the occasion to which I have adverted. For it is but just before the record of it, that there occurs the memorable narrative relating to Simon Magus; whom history has made known to us as the father of heresy. St. Luke, in concluding this narrative, gives us reason to suppose, that Simon desired, by repentance and prayer, to expiate his wicked imagination. But if we look to the sequel of events, it will appear, that his repentance endured but for a time; that he relapsed into all the depravity of his former life; that he became the founder of a nefarious sect; and that he promulgated a doctrine, full of impiety and lewdness. By this doctrine, the incarnation of our Lord was denied: so also were the creation of the world by God, and the Divine mission of Moses and of the Prophets of the Old Covenant: by this same doctrine, every wicked lust had a lawful gratification; and not only the obligation of duty,



but also the essential distinction of virtue and vice, were cancelled.<sup>d</sup> Now it is to be noted, that all this went along with an acknowledgment of the Divine authority of our Lord: these vile tenets were professed and propagated as doctrines of Christianity; and the miscreant followers of Simon wore the name of Christians. The same was the case of other heretics, living in or near the apostolic age: the various sects of whom, were so many branches, springing from the primitive stem of this child of perdition. Their doctrine was as contrary to Christianity as darkness is to light, and the depravity of it was such, as almost to surpass the reach of imagination: meanwhile, that doctrine was by them designated by the name of Christianity, and themselves by that of Christians. Let us attend to the representation of an ancient father: "All who, in any way whatever," says Irenæus, "adulterate the truth, and vitiate the public teaching of the Church, are the disciples and successors of Simon, the magician of Samaria. Although, for the purpose of seduction, they may keep back the confession of their master's name, it is nevertheless *his* doctrine which they teach. As an allure-ment, they employ, for outward pretension, the name of Jesus Christ; but it is the impiety of Simon, which, in various forms, they set forth. Thus do they destroy the lives of many. By means of a good name, they wickedly scatter abroad<sup>e</sup> their own doctrine, and by means of the sweetness and comeliness of [that] name, they hold out to them the bitter and malignant poison of the serpent,

<sup>d</sup> Iren. i. 20.<sup>e</sup> See the Supplementary Remarks.



who was the first author of falling away from God.”<sup>f</sup> Thus far Irenæus.

It was thus that there arose a necessity for Articles of Faith. It was not henceforth enough, on receiving a new member of the Church, to require an acknowledgment of the Divine authority of our Saviour; it was no longer to be taken for granted, respecting such as thus acknowledged Christ, that they also embraced his doctrine. These heretics all concurred in that acknowledgment. But it became henceforth necessary to be satisfied, respecting new converts, that they professed the doctrine, as well as admitted the authority, of our Saviour. For it would avail nothing towards the sanctification of men, that they should recognise that authority, while the sanction of it was claimed for a lewd and wicked doctrine. The apostles had received no commission to admit such converts into the Church: it was not to such proselytes, that they had been authorized to carry the promise of everlasting life. We see then the difference of the two cases. With respect to the creed of the devout Ethiopian, we find, that it acknowledges the Divine authority of our Saviour, and thus acknowledges the whole doctrine of Christianity: it embodies in it the whole faith, while it does not, explicitly and in detail, affirm any single article of it. This, in the infancy of the Church, would suffice to separate the believer from the infidel. But when, in after time, there came to be maintained any false principle, repugnant to the true doctrine, and, in some instances, entirely destructive of it; it became need-

<sup>f</sup> Iren. i. 30.



ful to ascertain, more closely, the qualification of those, who sought admission into the Church, and thus, to guard the true doctrine by exacting a denial of the false. For example: by some early heretics it was denied, that the supreme God was the Creator of the world: in this instance, the true doctrine is guarded, by affirming of God, that he is the “maker of heaven and earth.” Another tenet of primeval heresy consisted in the denial of a future resurrection: here again, the true faith is protected by these words: “*I look for the resurrection of the dead.*” The two defensive clauses, thus quoted, are Articles of Faith.

In thus speaking, I hope I am not departing from the established use of words. But however this may be; it will certainly contribute to obviate mistake and fallacy, if I thus clear away all ambiguous import from the use of language. The term itself may indeed be applied either to doctrines themselves, or to the expression of them. It is the latter with which I am concerned: that is to say, the forms of words prescribed by the Church for the profession of the faith; every such affirmation of truth being considered as an Article of Faith. For, with respect to Christian verities, considered in their own essential nature, and as being denoted by this term; it is very certain, that the Church has no authority to make any new Article of Faith: but with respect to the tenets declared and enunciated in Creeds, the Church is bound to add, and to vary its expression, according to the exigency which may arise, for guarding that sacred deposit, with which Christ has entrusted her: and the doc-



trinal positions of Creeds, when thus first prescribed, are to be regarded, not as new Articles of Faith considered apart from language, but as renewed declarations of the primitive and unalterable faith, and as additional defences, previously uncalled for, against heresy and falsehood.



## CHAPTER III.

## ON THE ORIGIN OF ARTICLES OF DOCTRINE.

**T**HE origin of Articles of Doctrine was very similar to that of Articles of Faith: being, in like manner, grounded on the commission, given by our Saviour to the pastors of his Church.

By this commission, it was given in charge to the first apostles, that they should teach men “to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them.”<sup>g</sup> It is to be added, that as they were to transmit their commission to future pastors, they could not do otherwise, than transmit this obligation as a part of it. To teach according to the instruction of Christ, was a necessary duty incumbent upon themselves, and a necessary qualification to all who should be appointed to the same office.

Such then are the obligations of an evangelist and pastor of the Church. In the execution of that function he was to teach the whole doctrine of Christ, and he was to teach nothing else. He was to teach the whole doctrine: for that is expressed in the very terms of his commission. And he was not to teach any thing else: because for doing this, he had no commission at all.

<sup>g</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.



With respect to this obligation, it may well be supposed, that it was, in the very earliest times, quite of a general nature, and that all various particulars of orthodox teaching were tacitly and impliedly comprehended in the one duty, of teaching the entire and unadulterated doctrine of Christ. This, it may well be thought, would be quite sufficient for the case of those, who, having first embraced the faith with simplicity and godly sincerity, had afterwards, with the same uprightness, undertaken to teach it. In the case of such ministers, it would chiefly be required, that they should be fully and soundly instructed: beyond this, there would be no necessity for precaution, in order to secure their fidelity relating to any separate principles and truths, which they had to deliver.

But this state of things did not long continue. There soon arose, even among the pastors of the Church, men who spoke perverse things, in order to draw away disciples after them, and who introduced, under the mask of Christianity, an adulterate doctrine; thus subverting the faith, and frustrating the purposes of the Gospel. What then, would be the duty of those, whose office it was to ordain pastors? They had no power to transmit any other commission, than that which themselves had received, namely, to preach the Gospel in its pure integrity. But how were they to keep away from this office, the teachers of lewdness and of blasphemy? From men who taught not the doctrine of eternal life, but the doctrine of perdition, how were they to withhold the authority, (which fidelity would never suffer them to impart,) of an ambassador of Christ? Under



the commission of Christ, men could preach only the doctrine of Christ; but what, in the case of false teachers, was to restrain them from teaching any doctrine that they would? It was impossible that this could be done, without ascertaining the soundness of men's faith: nor again, could this latter be done, without enquiry, as to all particulars respecting which danger was apprehended. There must needs be a declaratory abnegation of errors, which were to be suppressed, and a declaratory profession of truths, which must not be suppressed. It was thus necessary that there should be propounded, certain distinct tenets, whether of profession or of renunciation; such tenets relating, as need might be, to various essential parts of Christian doctrine. These tenets are nothing else than what we call Articles of Doctrine: and the purpose of such articles is, to secure the truth and purity of doctrine in those, who are about to enter the ministry of the Church, or who desire to continue in it. It is to provide, that they shall teach nothing, but what Christ has authorized them to teach, and what they themselves undertake to teach.

Thus Articles of Faith are intended to try and examine the purity of that Faith, which is to qualify for the Christian covenant: and Articles of Doctrine have the same relation to that doctrine, which is to qualify for the ministry of the Gospel. Of the former kind is the Apostles' Creed, which is prescribed as a qualification for Baptism: and the Thirty-nine Articles, when propounded for the assent of candidates for ordination, are Articles of Doctrine.



## CHAPTER IV.

THE PRIMITIVE AND PROGRESSIVE USE OF ARTICLES  
OF FAITH.

**O**F the principles thus laid down, a very clear illustration may be obtained from the necessities and the practice of the early Church.

In the time of St. Paul there had appeared two false teachers, named Hymeneus and Philetus, who gave out, "that the resurrection is past already." Now it is expressly, by this apostle,<sup>h</sup> declared to have been the effect of their doctrine, to "subvert the faith" of some believers. Thus, while there is only one faith which qualifies for salvation, it was the nature of their doctrine to overthrow that faith: in other words, to frustrate the purpose of Christianity in the salvation of men.

It appears also, that during the life of the apostle St. John, many deceivers had gone abroad in the world, who confessed not that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh.<sup>i</sup> These deceivers taught, that the visible form of our Saviour, while on earth, was a form of appearance only and not of reality. Of this tenet we may adopt the representation of a learned and

<sup>h</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 18.

<sup>i</sup> 2 John vii.



noble writer: who speaks of it, as a tenet subversive of the whole Gospel, and maintains, that if the incarnation and sufferings of Christ had been phantoms only and not realities, he must have been an enormous deceiver; that his murderers must have been exculpated from their dreadful guilt; that he could not possibly have been the Saviour of the world, and that we should not have owed him any gratitude; and that it would be, on our part, an exceeding folly to suffer for him, who had only pretended to suffer for us. To this effect does Lord King set forth what he calls, "the natural and tremendous consequences of this horrid and portentous opinion."<sup>k</sup> That which is only a phantom, and not a real body, cannot, according to the reasoning of Epiphanius,<sup>l</sup> either die or rise again: and it is certain that, if Christ be not risen from the dead, then our faith is vain.<sup>m</sup>

Here then are two instances in which we notice opinions, entertained by professing Christians, but totally destructive of Christianity. While such heresies subverted the faith required in baptism; there were others which, in another way, rendered null and void the baptismal covenant. This they did, by cancelling the obligation of repentance; which is, in baptism, the stipulated condition of forgiveness. For, while this obligation demands a total change of purposes and practices, and an entire transition from sin to obedience; the heresies of which I speak, gave an unbounded liberty to every evil inclination.

<sup>k</sup> Lord King's History of the Apostles' Creed, p. 160, ed. 1719.

<sup>l</sup> Haer. 40, c. 8.

<sup>m</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 14.



As an example of these latter we have the Nicolaitans: who seem to have maintained the lawfulness of idolatry and fornication, and respecting whom our Lord Himself declares, that He hates their works.<sup>n</sup> To this case I would add, that of Hymeneus and Alexander: who, if I mistake not the sense of St. Paul, discovered that strong propensity, so frequent among the symptoms of heresy, to disparage good works and to give them a character of repugnancy to faith. For they were, by that apostle himself, expelled from the fold of the Church; and the ground of their incurring this anathema seems to have been this, because, by putting away a good conscience, they had made shipwreck concerning the faith.<sup>o</sup>

Now with respect to both these cases it plainly appears, that the tenets were such as did, in their own nature, disqualify for baptism, and exclude from the Church. They involve a denial of that faith to which salvation is promised, and a contrariety to that repentance, which is the condition of forgiveness. Of men infected with these errors, truth would never warrant an admission into the fold, nor a continuance in it: no apostles had ever been commissioned to promise salvation to such men. Inasmuch therefore, as such tenets must necessarily be driven away from the Church; it became necessary to require of those who prayed admission or desired continuance therein, some test or profession, that they did not entertain such tenets: and the profession thus required, must, from the nature of the case, reach to a greater length, and embrace more parti-

<sup>n</sup> Rev. ii. 6. 14, 15.

<sup>o</sup> 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.



culars, than the simple creed, which speaks thus, and says no more: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Thus far my examples have been taken from Scripture. But my illustration will be more complete, if I refer to a few others, the date of which is later than the Scriptural era.

Among these I would particularly advert to the council, convened at Alexandria in the year 362, by the great Athanasius, and by Eusebius, bishop of Vercellae. In this council there was decreed a certain position of doctrine, declaring that the Incarnation of our Saviour consisted in taking upon him, not only a human body, but also a human soul. Respecting the holy fathers of this synod, the historian Socrates gives us plainly to understand, that in thus framing their determination, they merely spoke the judgment of anterior ages, and that they were not excogitating any new religion, but only reiterating and reaffirming that, which had been the constant teaching of the Church ever since it began to exist:<sup>p</sup> and this representation he proceeds to establish, by copiously alleging the authority of more ancient writers. Why then was this truth never, till a time later than the middle of the fourth century, put forth as an Article of Faith and Doctrine? For such, I believe, is the fact. The reason is, that this Article aimed at nothing else, than the contradiction and suppression of a false doctrine, then recently, and, as we may

<sup>p</sup> Ου γαρ νεαραν τινα θρησκειαν αποδεικτικως παρα τοις Χριστιανων επινοησαντες εις την εκκλησιαν εισηγαγον, αλλα απερ εξ αρχης και η εκκλησιαστικη παραδοσις ελεγε, και αποδεικτικως παρα τοις Χριστιανων σοφοις εφιλοσοφειτο. Socrat. Hist. Eccl. III. vii.



fairly suppose, for the first time, fabricated and published in the Church; nor would this article have been even thus now assumed into the public profession of the true faith, if the innovation of doctrine, introduced by Apollinaris, had never been published: it would, on the contrary, although in itself a sacred, inviolable, and indispensable verity, have been allowed to remain, as it had done for three foregoing centuries, in the Scriptures, and in the general acquiescence of the faithful.

The fourth General Council, which was held at Chalcedon in the year 451, decreed certain positions relating to the godhead and the humanity of Jesus Christ. These positions have, ever since that time, been received as the authoritative doctrine of the universal Church; but they had never, *till* that time, been put forth in this manner. The language of this council is most express and unequivocal. I would thus give an abbreviated representation of what it says relating to the present subject. After reciting the two creeds of the first and second General Councils, it speaks to this effect: that the Creed of Constantinople *was* sufficient for the full confession and confirmation of the true faith; but that, inasmuch as the enemies of truth were, by means of their own heresies, endeavouring to set at nought that declaration, and had thus given birth to vain discourses; therefore the holy and ecumenical synod, being desirous to exclude and to repel all their contrivances against the truth, and to assert unviolated, the doctrine which was from the beginning; had framed the present decrees and



determinations relating to the true faith.<sup>a</sup> It is thus, as we gather from the testimony of this council, that these statements, in the form prescribed by the Church, have been introduced: that is to say, for the sole purpose of preserving the true doctrine, from the poisonous defilement of the heresies, which had been severally published by Nestorius and Eutyches. I may properly add, in this place, that it was on the same principle, that the Church first adopted those several statements, relating to the Incarnation of our blessed Lord, which we find, in our own ritual, as a part of the Creed of St. Athanasius. This indeed rests upon internal evidence: but the evidence is such, as I think that no reasonable mind would resist. But to return to positive testimony: that of the Council of Chalcedon is very express, respecting a certain addition, which was made to the Nicene Creed at the second General Council. I refer to the words, not for the evidence of a fact, which is otherwise notorious and undisputed, but on account of the expressions: which are very pointed in their application to this subject, and which involve in them a plain assertion, respecting the holy fathers of this last named council, that it was not their purpose to make any addition to the Nicene Creed, but to declare the truth for the contradiction of error.

There is another formulary, to which I now invite attention. This is of a character quite different from the last mentioned, and is especially remarkable, as having drawn forth, from one of the most numerous councils that ever were held, not

<sup>a</sup> Evagrii Scholastici Eccl. Hist. II. iv.



only a recognition of the proper and right purpose of such formularies, but also a strong and unqualified repugnancy to every other.

In the year 359, the Council of Ariminum was convened by the Emperor Constantius ; and to this council there was proposed the adoption of an Arian creed. The creed thus produced was marked by strong peculiarities of distinction from other creeds. Among these we are principally to remark the title : according to which title it purported to be, “an Exposition of the Catholic Faith.” This title was understood to convey a departure from the tenor and profession of all former creeds : conveying the notion of an affirmative exposition of matters, which required not expounding ; whereas the legitimate end of such formularies is, not that of a general exposition of the true faith, but that of a special and circumstantial contradiction and condemnation of heresy. Thus, the true faith is indeed expounded and affirmed, but only on those points, in which it has been violated : as to any general exposition of the Christian faith, such as this Arian document purported to be ; of such formularies the primitive and orthodox Church, as I conceive, knows nothing. That this, by the fathers of the synod, was judged to be the true and legitimate character of such formularies, and that the formulary of the Arian bishops was adjudged to be an evil and pernicious departure from it ; will sufficiently appear from the sentiment declared by the majority. “It was not,” said they, “because we were in want of a faith, that we came together to this place : for we hold fast that sound faith, which we received from



the beginning. But we met here in order that, if, relating to this faith, any innovation should arise, that innovation we may put down."<sup>r</sup>

On the case before us, I would remark, that the decision of these orthodox fathers is such, as plainly to repudiate, in the formation of creeds, every notion of a general exposition of the faith, and likewise, every exposition and declaration relating to the faith, which is not called for by some specific necessity.

Again, it is to be remarked, that the inscription of this creed is said to have been received by the council with laughter and derision.<sup>s</sup> This inscription was to the following effect: "The Catholic Faith was [thus] set forth in the presence of our Lord, the Emperor, most pious and renowned for his victories, Constantius Augustus, the eternal and venerable, in the consulship of the most illustrious Flavius Eusebius, and of the most illustrious Flavius Hypatius, at Sirmium, on the eleventh day before the Calends of June."<sup>t</sup> Now the Christian Faith had been once for all delivered to the saints, above three centuries before this time: and the point of absurdity which here occurs to the derision of the council, is, that of the Christian Religion being thus, by these men, expounded and set forth, under the date of the year, the month, and the day. The same particular is strongly insisted upon by Athanasius. Can any thing more pointedly discover the sense of the Church, that such expositions were quite contrary to the right

<sup>r</sup> Socrat. Hist. Eccl. II. προγραφης των αναγνωσθεντων. Socrates ut supra. xxxvii.

<sup>s</sup> Κατεγελασαν δε και της <sup>t</sup> Athan. de Synod, c. 8.



employment of creeds? Athanasius speaks of it as a kind of confession, that the faith of these Arians was modern, factitious, and not older than the date of their formulary. But let us attend more closely to the reasoning of this illustrious man. I claim his authority as speaking to this effect: "Where is the need for fresh synods? The synod of Nice was convened by reason of urgent necessity: for the heresy of Arius had sprung up as an adversary to the Catholic Church. But what necessity is there here? What need have we for any new creed? The Nicene creed is fully sufficient for the wants of the Church: and no heresy, since the promulgation of that creed, has arisen, which its words do not condemn. It is idle therefore to run about and demand, that synods should be convoked for the sake of a creed, or for an exposition of the faith. For such a purpose, THE HOLY SCRIPTURE IS MORE POWERFUL AND EFFECTUAL THAN ALL THE SYNODS AND THE CREEDS IN THE WORLD."<sup>u</sup>

From this intrepid defender of truth, let us now pass on to another ancient father: who, no less than Athanasius, is, with respect to our present subject, a highly competent and evidential witness. His testimony will, perhaps, to some of my readers, be more intelligible, if I first place before them a view of the original creed of the Council of Nice: since that creed is here referred to, and it is considerably shorter than the formulary, which is commonly denoted by the name of the Nicene Creed, and which forms a part of our Liturgy. This original creed is thus expressed:

<sup>u</sup> Athan. de Synod, cc. 5, 6. See the Supplementary Remarks.



“ WE BELIEVE IN ONE GOD THE FATHER, ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF ALL THINGS BOTH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE : AND IN ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD, BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, THAT IS, OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE FATHER, GOD OF GOD, LIGHT OF LIGHT, VERY GOD OF VERY GOD ; BEGOTTEN, NOT MADE ; BEING OF ONE SUBSTANCE WITH THE FATHER ; BY WHOM ALL THINGS WERE MADE, BOTH THE THINGS IN HEAVEN AND THE THINGS ON EARTH ; WHO, FOR US MEN AND FOR OUR SALVATION, CAME DOWN [FROM HEAVEN], AND WAS MADE FLESH, MADE MAN, SUFFERED, AND ROSE [FROM THE DEAD] ON THE THIRD DAY, [AND] ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN ; WHO IS COMING TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD : AND IN THE HOLY GHOST.”<sup>v</sup>

Now it is to be remarked that, subsequently to the date of this formulary, there had arisen another heresy, namely, that of the Macedonians : which heresy denied the Godhead of the Holy Spirit. Epiphanius, while reasoning against the Macedonians, supposes them, to plead in their defence, that they professed the Nicene Creed, and to call upon him to produce, from that creed, any declaration of the tenet which they denied. By the Nicene Creed we are here to understand no other, than the formulary presented above. The answer of Epiphanius is two-fold. One answer is, that even by this very creed, it will be found that they are confuted. This allegation I consider to be most true and certain : the proof of it, as being both foreign to my present purpose, and proper for future consideration, I shall postpone. The other answer proceeds to explain

<sup>v</sup> Socrat. Hist. Eccl. I. 8.



the framing of that creed upon these grounds: That the Nicene Creed had been formed against the heresy of Arius; that at the time of the Nicene Council, the question, relating to the Godhead of the Holy Spirit, had never been raised; and that it is the practice of synods, in relation to such formularies, to protect themselves against the danger which from time to time may arise. In this representation, I have been particularly careful to guard against overstatement: and I will therefore add my judgment, respecting the latter part of the words referred to: which is, that if the Greek idiom and the author's purpose, be duly considered, Epiphanius will be found to say no less than this: "For synods *only* provide for themselves safety against the danger which from time to time arises." <sup>x</sup>

Epiphanius affords strong additional testimony to the same effect, in a treatise which he wrote in the year 374. In this work, addressing himself to certain presbyters who had begged his help and instruction, he strongly urges them to teach the Creed of the Nicene Council: after which, he proceeds to represent that, inasmuch as, subsequently to the date of that council, and in their own lifetime, there had sprung up, one after another, certain other heresies; on this account, with reference to the heresies which had thus emerged, a more extended creed had been adopted by all orthodox bishops, and by the Catholic Church. Of this he subjoins a copy, and the enlargement of it is particularly marked by special clauses of contradic-

<sup>x</sup> Προς γαρ το ὑποπιπτον εν καιρῳ και καιρῳ, αἱ συνοδοι την ασφαλειαν ποιουνται. Haer. 74, c. 14.



tion, to the several heresies of which had been published in the interval between the Nicene Council and the date of his treatise.<sup>y</sup>

We have now to remark upon the creed, which is by us commonly called the Nicene, but which, with the exception of one short clause, is in truth the creed of the Second General Council, held at Constantinople in the year 381. It is easy to observe the difference between this formulary, and that of the real Nicene Creed, of which I have given a translation above. To various clauses of both these creeds, I may have future occasion to advert: for the present purpose of illustration I will only observe, that the earlier of these formularies was specially framed for the condemnation of the Arian tenet, which denied the Godhead of the Son; and that the second of them has the same view in relation to the heresy of the Macedonians, which denied the Godhead of the Holy Spirit; the last mentioned heresy having sprung up in the space of time which elapsed between the two general councils, by which these creeds were respectively set forth. It will be seen that this difference is chiefly that of enlargement.

Hilary of Poitiers is an author, who yields to our present subject very clear illustration and powerful testimony. He writes from Phrygia, in the year 358, during his exile: at a time when Christendom was dreadfully convulsed by the struggles of the Arian impiety, and when, owing to this cause, the

<sup>y</sup> Epiphaniî Ancoratus, cc. 119, 120, 121. in Tom. Opp. 2. Ed. Colon. [The reader will be on his guard against an error in the numbering of the chapters.]



promulgation of new creeds was frequent beyond example. It is to this effect that, while instructing the western Christians on the state of the oriental church, he expresses himself. "It ought to be no wonder to you, my dearest brethren, that the practice has arisen, of putting forth such frequent expositions of the Faith. It is the madness of heretics which creates this necessity." Again: "On all sides we are surrounded by stumbling-blocks, by schisms, and by infidelity."<sup>2</sup> This is the reason why some, who had previously signed one creed, were afterwards called upon to sign another."<sup>a</sup> This will be further explained by my next quotation. "The true enunciation of doctrine has been studied in many various forms, as you may gather from the purposes and convictions of the bishops [who put them forth], and the right sense of things has been expounded by means of each of these written formularies of the Faith: and [thus] each separate form of doctrinal impiety has been crushed."<sup>b</sup> And what shall we think of the following passage from the same treatise? "Meanwhile," says Hilary to the Western Christians, "how blessed are you in the Lord! and how glorious is your condition! who, retaining in conscience and in profession, the perfect and apostolical faith, are till this time unacquainted with written formularies."<sup>c</sup> And again: "It was necessity which introduced the practice of expounding the faith, and

<sup>2</sup> The word is *perfidia*; by *fides*, when denoting good faith in which, as applied by the Fathers, matters of promise and covenant. in the case of heresy, I understand, the contrary of *fides*, used in the sense of religious belief, not of

<sup>a</sup> Hilar. de Synod. c. 63.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. c. 62.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid. c. 63.



of subscribing the exposition. When there arises danger to the inward apprehension of the Faith, then the written formulary is rendered necessary."<sup>d</sup>

On a right judgment of these formularies, we may well concur with this renowned confessor, in praising that condition of the Church, by which they were unrequired. But as to the necessity for them, we must remember, that this was not created by the Church, but by her adversaries. And we must remember also with Hilary, the duty of maintaining these defences, as an appointed and indispensable protection to the Faith. On a parallel view of things, we might look back, with lamentation and bitter regret, to the time of man's innocency: but we shall never restore that time, by abolishing the laws of restraint upon his crimes. Still, however, with all the best feelings of piety and zeal, it is quite necessary, that we should consider these formularies in their true character, and regard them, not as the embellishments of the holy city, but as its mounds and barriers. The following narrative may perhaps afford an illustration, amusing as well as instructive, of both the right view of this subject, and the misapprehension of it.

In the year, 968, Luitprand, bishop of Cremona, was sent by the Saxon emperor of the West, Otho the second, on an embassy to Constantinople. The prelate seems to have experienced some inconvenience from the insolent demeanour of the Greek emperor, Nicephorus Phocas. Among other incidents of this nature, there arose between them a remarkable dialogue: the general tenor of which,

<sup>d</sup> Hilar. de Synod. c. 63.



as far as it relates to our present subject, I would thus represent. "What are the Councils," says the oriental potentate, "which you receive in Germany?" The bishop answers: "Those of Nice, of Chalcedon, of Ephesus, of Antioch, of Carthage, of Ancyra, and of Constantinople." The Emperor rejoins, with a laugh, seemingly expressive of national contempt: "You have forgot to mention the council of Saxony: we have not indeed any account of it in our collections; but it is of so very recent a date, that there has not been time for a copy to reach us." The bishop replies: "It is usual to apply the caustic to the limb which is diseased; and it was for a similar reason, that it was found necessary to hold the councils of the Church in the neighbourhood of this city: because it was here that those heresies originated, which the councils laboured to extinguish. As for Saxony, since the day when it was first evangelized, heresy has been entirely unknown to it: it has therefore had no need of a council."<sup>e</sup> It is obvious that the councils are here spoken of with reference solely to that, which was their principal work: namely, the framing and promulgating Articles of Faith for the suppression of heretical doctrine.

As I am now aiming at illustration, rather than evidence, I will proceed to a memorable passage in the history of the Council of Trent: because it is remarkable for summing up and reiterating, after so many centuries, the true principles of the ancient

<sup>e</sup> Luitprandi Legatio ad Nicephorum Phocam. (In Corp. Scriptor. Hist. Byzant. Parte xi. p. 352. ed. 1828.) Fleury's Eccl. Hist. B. 56. c. 20.



Church relating to this subject. It is here described as the practice of the ancient councils, "either to compose creeds against the heresies which they condemned; or to renew the anterior creeds against heresies already condemned: the latter being done in order, either to give enforcement by some added interpretation, or at least to recall the memory of the creeds themselves." And the council ordained by its first decree, that its proceedings should open with the profession of the Faith, that is, with the recitation of the creed; thus following, as it professes to do, "the examples of the fathers, whose practice it was, in the most holy councils, to hold out, at the beginning of their sessions, this shield of defence against every heresy."<sup>f</sup> Now it might seem to involve, even on the part of Cardinal Morone, the papal legate at this synod, a reprehension of departure from such a sentiment, when, at a conference with the emperor, and speaking with relation to the past, he manifested this desire; namely, that there should be, for the future, an avoidance of all new disputation on matters of doctrine, and that the council should confine itself henceforth to the sole work of resistance to error.<sup>g</sup> This is a high Romish authority respecting the Council of Trent: and certainly it does not discountenance the judgment, pronounced by certain catholic prelates of our own. "To make any man subscribe to school opinions,<sup>h</sup> may justly seem hard

<sup>f</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 142. c. 46 and 48. my readers, to inform them, that by *school opinions*, are here meant

<sup>g</sup> Ibid. b. 164. c. 7. *scholastical* opinions: that is to

<sup>h</sup> It may be useful to some of say, theological opinions wan-



in the Church of Christ, and was one great fault of the Council of Trent.”<sup>i</sup>

It may be observed, respecting our three creeds, that the language is, in part, remarkably simple, and remote from scientific precision. This character will probably be found to prevail the more, in proportion to the greater antiquity of the several clauses: and it may reasonably be supposed, that simpler language was at first sufficient, and that the more elaborate definition was, in later times, drawn forth by the progress of heretical evasion and equivocation. Meanwhile, the simpler forms answered the purpose of a Symbolum, or watchword, or token, of the true faith.”<sup>k</sup> But when, in progress of time, evasions were more and more resorted to: the only possible remedy consisted in this; that language should be rendered more precise, and that, in lieu of terms liable to equivocation, there should be an employment of others, which were not capable of it. Witness the case of Nestorius, who seems to have shielded his heresy under the pretence of subscribing the Nicene Creed: that is, of subscribing it according to the sense which he affixed, not according to that which the Nicene Council had imposed: to him, Cyril of Alexandria writes to this effect. “It

tonly delivered, after the manner of the schoolmen, in a way of needlessly subtle and useless speculation, on subjects which do not require, in order to salvation, any judgment or determination whatever. This will suffice, I hope, for explaining a term, which will probably recur to our use frequently in our future pro-

gress; and I trust that it will be sufficiently safe from misleading the reader by any false impression. I do not give it as an unexceptionable definition: nor perhaps would it be very easy to frame any.

<sup>i</sup> Collier's Eccl. Hist. vol. ii. p. 734.

<sup>k</sup> See the Suppl. Rem.



is not enough, that you should merely profess the creed, which, conformably to the exigence of the time, was put forth by the Nicene fathers: for while you confess the words, you put upon them a false and perverted meaning: but it is further necessary, that you subscribe and swear to a renunciation of your own profane and polluted dogmas, and that you do this in such a form, as to declare these dogmas incompatible with Christian salvation, and to separate yourself from the communion of all who hold them: unless you do this, you are yourself deposed from the office of a bishop.”<sup>1</sup> And accordingly, there are prescribed in this same epistle, twelve Articles of Doctrine, which Nestorius, conformably to the tenor of the foregoing requirement, is called upon both to renounce and proscribe. It is on the same view that there was written, by the same Cyril, an Exposition of the Nicene Creed: this was composed for the express purpose of vindicating the true meaning of that formulary, from misconstructions which had been put upon it.<sup>m</sup>

I have now given a selected view of materials, which I have brought together chiefly for *illustration*. Of the foregoing examples, it is obvious, that some, though useful for explanation, are too modern to bear any weight of *argument*. With respect to the others; they will be allowed, in point of evidence, the value to which they are entitled. Of such evidence, more will occur in our future progress. I will now observe, that this is the *character* of evidence, from which I am led to infer the sense of the

<sup>1</sup> Cyril Alex. Opp. Tom. v. part. 2. Epistolarum p. 67. Ed. 1638.

<sup>m</sup> Cyril Alex. ut sup. p. 176.



primitive church. And when I appeal to the primitive church, be it specially considered respecting creeds, that this is the only available testimony. I speak with a restricted application to those creeds, which are comprehended in my present labour of vindication: of these I say, that the moderns did not make them, and therefore are not competent to declare the purposes for which they were made.

It thus appears then, that our creeds were not designed as general expositions of Christian doctrine, but only for such special expositions, as occasional exigences might demand. Such was the first intention of Articles of Faith and Doctrine. It was not that of selecting, from the body of revealed truth, certain doctrines more important than the rest. It was not that of framing a summary, to serve as a basis of more enlarged instruction, or as a facility for teaching the Christian religion. These notions are, I believe, very commonly entertained: but they involve a very false, and as I conceive, a very pernicious, view of the subject. These Articles are not the appointed sources, from which, *primarily*, we are to derive the substance and body of the faith: and as to public preaching and popular instruction, our best course will be, to have regard to our solemn commission and duty, as declared to us in these words: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."<sup>n</sup> The truths, affirmed in these Articles, have not been placed there on account of any inherent fitness, dictating this prominent enunciation; but on account of

<sup>n</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.



false doctrines which it was necessary thus to repel. Had these false doctrines never emerged, these articles would never have been thus propounded. If, for example, the doctrine of Pelagius had never been broached, the Church would not, in this form have put forth the true doctrine relating to Original Sin. If the peculiar tenets of Arius had never been published, no creed would have been framed for assertion of the contrary verities. "If the Church," says the Abbé Fleury, "sometimes makes new decisions and employs new terms, this is not done in order to form or to express new doctrines: it is only in order to declare what it has all along believed, and to apply proper remedies to the new subtleties of heretics."<sup>o</sup>

<sup>o</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. Preface, c. 10.



## CHAPTER V.

BOTH ARTICLES OF FAITH AND ARTICLES OF DOCTRINE  
ARE ESSENTIAL TO CHRISTIANITY.

**T**HAT Articles of Faith are indispensable to the being of Christianity; will readily appear, from considering the nature of the adverse principle, which they are intended to suppress. That principle is heresy.

Now of heresy we shall provide a description, at once indisputably true, and sufficient for our present purpose, if we say, agreeably to Epiphanius,<sup>p</sup> that it assumes the name of Christianity without the faith. If therefore you would deny to the pastors of the Church, the use of Articles of Faith; it is but saying, in other words, that such pastors shall be required to admit into the congregation of faithful people, all men whatever, who shall choose to name themselves Christians. It will matter not, on this footing, whether, along with the profession of Christianity, a man do or do not embrace the doctrine of it; but you would allow him to combine with that profession, an inward belief of any doc-

<sup>p</sup> In the early part of his *Ονομα μονου Χριστου εχουσαι αλλ' ουχι την πιστιν, αιρεσεις αυται.*  
epistle to Acacius and Paulus.



trines whatever, even of those taught by Hesiod, or Zoroaster, or Mahomet, or Epicurus. Such a man, on this view of things, is to be received within the pale of the Church, and taught by its authority, to consider himself entitled to all the privileges and promises of Christian redemption. If you will *not* admit this, you *must* admit the necessity of Articles of Faith. For there cannot without them be any security against any errors, however impure and however blasphemous, which a man may entertain together with the profession of Christianity.

Should it be thought, that the supposition of such a case is rather violent and farfetched: I will drop the language of supposition, and proceed to the reality of truth and to facts of undoubted record. The doctrines which, by the heretics of the apostolical and early ages, were taught in connexion with the profession of Christianity, and under the name of it, are those, from which, as I contend, the earlier creeds were designed to purify the Church. Of these doctrines, it would very inadequately represent the quality, if it were merely said of them, that they are as bad as Paganism, and as remote from Christianity, as the mythology of Hesiod is. As a proof of this, it will only be needful to allege the accounts of Epiphanius, and of other ancient authors who have historically treated of this subject. Herein may be found a kind of moral and religious teaching, so atrocious and so polluting, as to shock, not only the principle of virtue, but even the commonest sentiments of nature, even those of bad men. Not even from the worst descriptions, as far as I am aware, of Pagan impiety, can any thing



be produced, so strongly repugnant to Christianity, as these forms of doctrine, presented to the world under the name of it: forms which realized in practice the foulest and most recondite imaginations of lewdness, the most dreadful profanation of things holy and awful. Eusebius, speaking of the doctrine and the sect of Simon Magus, expresses himself after this manner. "Whatever can possibly be, or can be imagined, more polluted, than the greatest turpitude existing in the world, all this has been surpassed by the excessive pollution of the Simonian heresy."<sup>1</sup>

It requires to be specially noted, that all these heretics wore the name of Christians, gave the name of Christianity to their vile doctrines, and acknowledged Christ as a teacher authorized by God. These several sects were all, according to the current phrase, so many denominations of Christians. On a distinct regard to such cases, I know not whether the liberalism of modern times might not be staggered, in the language of comprehensive esteem, which it sometimes applies to all the various denominations of the Christian world.

The case may be briefly summed up. The apostles could not either admit these heretics into the Church, or suffer them to remain in it. They had no commission to that effect. Had they done it, they must have destroyed both their own souls, and the souls of those, whom, while in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, without part or lot in the gospel, they taught to regard them-

<sup>1</sup> Οτι ποτε γαρ αν ειη η επινοηθειη υπερηκοντισεν η τωνδε μυσαρωτατη παντος αισχρου μιαιρωτερον, τουτο παν αιρεσις. Euseb. Eccl. Hist. II. 13.



selves as heirs of salvation. It was therefore perfectly necessary, that such misbelievers should be kept separate from the Church: it could not be otherwise, without a dreadful perfidy both to God and man. To endure within the fold of the Church, this false Christianity, was in effect to cancel the true: to have made this impiety compatible with the hope of heaven, was virtually to abrogate that religion, which denounces upon it the pains of hell. As to the Christian Church; if it was to be a society open to such persons, it must have been one, for which no imaginable depravity of life or doctrine could disqualify. If then this Church was to be kept pure from such horrible defilement: it is quite plain, that Articles of Faith are essential to Christianity. For it would thus be unavoidably necessary, that the qualification of a right faith should be ascertained, and that there should be a distinct renunciation and disavowal of such opinions, as were contrary to the prescribed terms of salvation. To do this is the use of Articles of Faith, and without them it cannot be done.

It is scarcely necessary to add any thing respecting Articles of Doctrine: since it is obvious, that whatever security may be required against erroneous belief, the same must be still more needful against erroneous teaching. For teaching is the appointed method of propagating Christian truth: and the error of faith may be viewed as the malady of one man, while that of teaching, from its diffusive nature, may more fitly be compared to an epidemic and desolating plague: to which indeed it is similar, though its ravages are far more dreadful; inasmuch



as its deadly influence affects not the body but the soul, and spreads, beyond the limits of time, into the life of the world to come.

Observe in conclusion the following representation of Bishop Bull.<sup>r</sup> “The question, whether we are to maintain the Faith of the Nicene Fathers or that of Arius, will come at last to this; whether the doctrine of the apostles is, or is not, to be preferred to the fictions of the impious Gnostics, who disturbed the Apostolical Churches. I think that no Christian will take long to make up his mind which side he ought here to take.” And now, respecting Articles of Faith and of Doctrine, considered in their general character, and with respect to their proper design, I will in like manner affirm, what I trust will be fully warranted by the foregoing considerations: that if the question be agitated, whether we are to retain or abolish them, it is virtually the same thing with putting the question, whether we are to retain or abolish the Christian Religion.

<sup>r</sup> Def. Fid. Nic. Sect. iii. c. i. §. 16.



## CHAPTER VI.

ARTICLES OF FAITH WERE ENJOINED BY CHRIST AND  
IMPOSED BY THE EARLIEST APOSTLES.

**I**T has been contended, that it was from nothing less than an imperative necessity, that Articles of Faith were first inserted into the Creeds of the Church. I proceed to shew, how far this representation is confirmed by the administration of the earliest apostles.

Mention has already been made<sup>s</sup> of Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander: as it also has of that early description of heretics, who denied the reality of our Saviour's body, and who, from this peculiarity, were named Docetae. In connexion with these heretics, I have adverted to the doctrine, which separates a good conscience from the obligation of a Christian Faith: for it is so that I understand the words of the apostle: and I have marked this doctrine, as one which had actually incurred the anathema of St. Paul. I have also noticed, as a doctrine which subverted the faith, that deadly error, that the resurrection is past already: and the error of the Docetae has also been spoken of, as one, re-

<sup>s</sup> Chap. 4.



specting the teacher of which St. John says, "This is a deceiver and an antichrist."<sup>t</sup> Now what is actually recorded respecting one of these errors, must certainly be true respecting the others. St. Paul, in the due exercise of apostolical power, could not endure in the *pale* of the Church, a doctrine, which subverted the *faith* of the Church; neither could St. John, in the like exercise of authority delegated by God, permit the doctrine of antichrist to mingle with the communion of the faithful. From such errors the Church could not be protected nor purified, without a renunciation of them; and the form of renunciation must unavoidably embrace an Article of Faith.

I proceed to another instance. Here we have an injunction from an apostle, which is delivered in the form of a message from God himself. "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's seat *is*; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or

<sup>t</sup> 2 John 7.



else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."<sup>u</sup>

We have, I say, in the case before us, a message: it is sent by the Son of God, and addressed to a bishop of the Church. The bishop is highly commended for maintaining, with steadfastness, his profession of the faith: in doing which his virtue had been rendered conspicuous by a dreadful effort of intimidation: for he had held fast the name of Jesus, even at a time of raging persecution, when a faithful martyr, named Antipas, had been put to death for this very cause. It seems not improbable, that the murder of this saint was perpetrated in some pagan temple; for it seems to be denoted, that he was slain in the place where Satan dwelt: to this temple, he may, according to a common usage of pagan persecution, have been taken, in order to compel him, for the preservation of life, to burn incense to an idol, or to eat of the meat offered on the altar. Now the faith of the bishop of Pergamos has this high commendation; that it had been maintained unshaken, even at a time, when this example of cruelty occurred, and with a full contemplation of incurring the same cruelty himself.

But the commendation of this glorious virtue is followed by words of rebuke. Let us consider then the occasion of this rebuke. It is this; that the same bishop allowed to be, and to continue, among the flock which he governed, that is, to remain in the communion of his Church, some who maintained a doctrine contrary to the faith of the Gospel. "*But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast*

<sup>u</sup> Rev. ii. 12—16.



*there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam: thou hast them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.*" Here then is a censure for not expelling from the Church the holders of certain false tenets. Now the only mode, known in that age, of such expulsion; the only mode which Christianity permits; is, that of propounding certain verities, either condemnatory, or at least renunciative, of the false doctrine: while a refusal to admit those verities is followed by the excommunication of the misbeliever. Such propositions are nothing else than *Articles of Faith*. The bishop of Pergamos could not repel the Nicolaitanes from his fold, till he had called upon them to disown their errors: without applying the same test, he could make no distinction between those who were to be repelled, and those who were to be retained: and it is not possible that this could have been done without employing *Articles of Faith*. The same will appear from the mandate, immediately following the present, to the bishop of Thyatira. He also is rebuked for suffering the false prophetess Jezebel to teach impiety and error. What remedy was there to this evil, other than demanding, as a condition of communion, that this impious doctrine should be renounced? And how can this be demanded, without *Articles of Faith*? In like manner we may truly argue, respecting all the above-named instances. St. Paul could not expel Hymenæus from the Church, nor reconcile him to it, without exacting a profession of faith, and that profession would fully realize what we call an *Article of Faith*.



It will plainly appear then, that the power of decreeing such articles not only belongs to the authority of the Church: but moreover, that it is a power which, whenever need may arise, the rulers of the Church are, under an awful responsibility to God, bound to put in force.



## CHAPTER VII.

THE USE OF THEM, AFTER THE AGE OF THE FIRST APOSTLES, CONTINUED TO BE BOTH JUSTIFIABLE AND NECESSARY.

**BUT** it may be said: The first apostles were guided by an infallible direction, and therefore, their practice is no precedent for other men.

To this I reply, that as other men must succeed to their office, they must succeed also to the necessary power thereof: those who at any time had the power of admitting into the Church, of retaining in it, or of repelling from it; must have had the power of fixing the terms of communion. The bishops of Pergamos and Thyatira were not of the number of the first Apostles: yet are they rebuked by God for laxity in the exercise of this power. Whenever therefore a false professor of Christianity sought to be recognised as a member of the Church, it would be needful to repel him: nor could this be done without an inquiry into his belief, that is to say, without propounding Articles of Faith.

We see then, that the occasions of framing Articles of Faith would naturally arise after, as well as before, the death of the first Apostles. Nor can



we deny the lawful power of it: for it is plain that their successors must have had the same power with themselves of transacting the covenant between God and man. I will add a few remarks to shew, that they might be, and were, under the necessity of using this power. In order to this, I will again avail myself of the labours of the learned Lord Chancellor King, who thus expresses himself respecting those words of the Apostles' Creed: "*From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*"

"As for the occasion" says his lordship, "of the inserting this article in the creed, or the reason or cause of it, I apprehend it to have been two-fold; that it was designed to be an antidote against two sorts of most pestilent heretics, viz. the *Marcionites* and the *Gnostics*: the former of whom blasphemed the *Judge*, and the other subverted the *judgment*. Against whom it is most pertinently repeated in the creed, That *Jesus Christ* himself shall come to judge the world, that is, to dispense rewards and punishments to every man according to his works. As for *Marcion* and his followers, they, together with their master *Cerdon*, imagined two Gods: *the one, an unknown, good, and merciful God; the other a just and severe God, the Maker and Creator of the world. The former, or the good God, they affirmed to be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that both He and his Son were nothing else but pity, grace and love; that the Son's design in coming into the world, was only to save those from the severity of the Maker of the world who should fly unto him; but as for others, though they should be the most flagitious and abominable sinners, yet he would never condemn or punish*



*them.* Which monstrous and horrid tenet, opens a flood gate to all licentiousness and impiety; for if God be only good, and not also just, who will ever obey his commandments, and especially such of them as are contrary to men's sensual inclinations and carnal interests? If there be no fear of a future punishment, the sensualists and voluptuous are, without contradiction, the wisest and most prudent men; and it would be a most unaccountable folly to mortify the flesh, to renounce the world, yea, and to deny interest, life, and all, to serve and obey that God, who is not at all displeased with any of our disobedient actions, and, being not displeased, will never punish us, though we freely plunge ourselves in all sorts of debaucheries and impurities. On which account, in a just detestation of this impious doctrine, *Tertullian* elegantly cries out, '*Hear this, all ye sinners, and ye who are not so yet, that ye may be so. Such a kind God is found, who is neither offended nor angry, nor revengeth, who hath no fire burning in hell, nor gnashing of teeth in utter darkness: he is altogether good: he prohibits sin in words only; it is at your pleasure, whether you will obey him or no; for, he doth not desire to be feared by you.*'

“Wherefore, in contradiction to this destructive tenet of all religion and piety, the Rule of Faith declares, that God is not only good, but that he is also just; that he is a Judge as well as a Saviour; that He and his Son are justice and equity, as well as grace and mercy; that *Christ Jesus* did not only die and rise again for the good and weal of mankind, but that *he will also come to judge the quick and the*



*dead, to examine into all men's carriages and behaviours, and to reward them suitably thereunto; not only to give glory and honour, immortality and eternal life to the penitent and believing, but also to render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doth evil."*<sup>v</sup>

My purpose, in quoting these remarks, is only to shew, that the successors of the earliest Apostles were under the same necessity, as those Apostles themselves, of employing Articles of Faith. For the errors of Cerdon and Marcion were later than their time: yet were they wholly destructive of the baptismal covenant and entirely contradictory to those conditions, on which only, the pastors of the Church are authorized by God to offer salvation to mankind. If this conclusion were unsatisfactory, I would beg you to consider the flagrant absurdity of the contrary opinion. I suppose I may take it for granted, that the blasphemous impieties of Marcion, would not, by the primitive Apostles, have been admitted into the communion of the Church, as if consistent with Christian hope and salvation. If this be admitted, the case will suppose, that such impieties, during the lives of the first apostles, would have been repelled from the Church, but that after their death, those same impieties would have become transmuted into lawful principles of Church communion."

<sup>v</sup> King's Hist. of the Apostles' Creed, p. 287.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE CAUSE OF VARIATION IN CREEDS.

**I**T will not be unseasonable at this time to invite attention to a point, which would naturally result from the state of the case.

It is important to remark, that the creeds of different Churches were various, while their faith was the same. This arose from the varying necessity of fencing themselves against those inroads of false doctrine, to which each Church was more particularly exposed. As an example, we may take the following. The Creed of the Roman Church began: "I believe in God the Father Almighty." To these words, the Creed of the Church of Aquileia adds: "Invisible and Impassible." Now these two words were added, in contradiction to the heresy of the Sabellians or Patripassians: who taught, that the Eternal Father was made man in the person of our Saviour, that he was seen of men, and that he suffered on the cross.<sup>x</sup> The circumstances of the Church at Aquileia might probably

<sup>x</sup> See Lord King's Hist. of the 182, ed. 1797; with the passage Apostles' Creed, p. 39; and Bishop of Ruffinus, referred to by them Pearson's Exposition, vol. 2. p. both.



thus call for security against an infection, to which the Church of Rome was less exposed. In like manner, the Roman Creed says, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." But an Oriental Creed has it, "in *one* God;" and again, "Maker of heaven and earth, *and of all things, both visible and invisible.*" These two variations seem to have been both occasioned by those Oriental heresies, which denied the unity of the godhead, and which ascribed to two different creators the production of the human soul and that of the visible world.<sup>y</sup>

To illustrate this matter further, I will here recite the ancient creed of the most ancient Church in the world, namely, that of Jerusalem. The words of it are as follows:

"I BELIEVE IN ONE GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, AND OF ALL THINGS, BOTH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE:

"AND IN ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD, WHO WAS BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER BEFORE ALL AGES, TRUE GOD, BY WHOM ALL THINGS WERE MADE: WHO WAS INCARNATED AND BECAME MAN, WAS CRUCIFIED AND BURIED; AND WHO ROSE FROM THE DEAD ON THE THIRD DAY, AND WENT UP INTO THE HEAVENS, AND SAT DOWN ON THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER: AND WHO IS COMING TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD: OF WHOSE KINGDOM THERE SHALL NOT BE AN END:

"AND [I BELIEVE] IN THE HOLY GHOST, THE PARACLETE, WHO SPAKE BY THE PROPHETS: IN ONE BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS: AND IN

<sup>y</sup> Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. 6. §. 16.



ONE CATHOLIC CHURCH : AND IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH : AND IN THE LIFE EVERLASTING."

On the first view of this creed, it is obvious to note the particulars, in which it differs from that called the Apostles' Creed. One of these particulars I will select for illustration. It is here said of the Holy Spirit: "Who spake by the Prophets." I will proceed then to explain, why these words are inserted in the Creed of Jerusalem, and not in the Apostles' Creed.

Among other shocking and blasphemous doctrines of the ancient Gnostics, it was taught and maintained, that the God, revealed in the Gospel, is not the same God that created the visible world, and that is revealed by the Law and the Prophets; and that the prophets of the Mosaic Dispensation were not inspired by the Holy Spirit, but by a virtue emanating from another God, namely, from that God, by whom they taught that the visible world was made.<sup>2</sup> Now there is little doubt, that the words under consideration were specifically intended to contradict and condemn this horrid and atrocious doctrine; and that they are inserted in the Creed of Jerusalem, because the Asiatic Christians were greatly infested by these detestable sectaries, and omitted in the Creed of the Church of Rome, that is to say, in the Apostles' Creed, because that Church was almost wholly free from their attacks.<sup>a</sup>

It was thus that arose the variations of creeds. They were so framed as to meet the changing varieties of falsehood: and, as it was heresy

<sup>a</sup> Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. 6. §. 11.

<sup>a</sup> Ibid. c. 5. §. 3.



that first occasioned the necessity of such formularies, so would the changes of heresy create a necessity for variations in them. But it must obviously be seen, that variations thus arising would create no necessity for any breach of Church Communion : nor in fact did any such schisms or separations arise from it. For, while these various creeds prevailed among the various Churches, the whole family of the faithful were united in one body and in one communion : nor was this peaceable condition much, if at all, disturbed, till about the middle of the third century.



## CHAPTER IX.

ON THE RIGHT EMPLOYMENT OF CREEDS AND OF  
ARTICLES OF DOCTRINE.

**CREEDS** are terms of communion, and apply to two occasions; namely, the question of admission into the Church, and the question of continuance in it.

Our blessed Lord has given to men, authorized by Him, the power of determining who shall be members of his Church. Hence belongs to those men a power of imposing Articles of Faith: and this power, being not given for arbitrary use, but in order to the fulfilment, by wise and faithful stewards, of their master's will, must be exercised according to the will of God: for to that will, the binding and loosing of the Church must always be obedient. There are therefore two cases for the exercise of this power: first, admission into the Church; secondly, continuance in it. Without a right Faith, men are qualified for neither. With respect to both, the true qualification is, that faith only which Christ taught, and not, any faith whatever to which men may give the name of Christianity. Now this qualification cannot, generally speaking, be ascertained without Articles of Faith.



Hence there are two occasions for the use of creeds. The first is preliminary to baptism: the second, at any time when the Church prescribes them; and more particularly, when it requires protection against heresy. In the former instance, the creed is, with us of the Church of England, applied, in the form of questions, either to those who come to be baptized, or else to their sponsors. As to the latter, there are upon record, a great multitude of cases, in which, as a condition of remaining in communion, men have been called upon to renounce explicitly some particular heresy. Such was the test provided at the first general council for the exclusion of Arianism.

With respect to the latter use, it may be noticed, that it has obtained a general prevalence throughout the whole church. Thus the Apostles' Creed is with us, as a form of affirmative profession, recited in the daily service of the Church. The creeds, known by the names of Athanasian and Nicene, are of similar use. But of this use we find no traces in the more primitive ages. "There is no reason," says Mr. Palmer, "to think, that any creed was used in the liturgy during the first ages of the Church. It was probably introduced, to exclude heretics more effectually from the communion."<sup>b</sup> These formularies were never thus used in the first four centuries. The earliest occasion, of which I am aware, of their being thus employed, is that, noted by this learned and excellent writer, as occurring in the Church of Antioch about the year 471; and the first introduction of it into the liturgy of Constan-

<sup>b</sup> Origines Liturgicæ, c. iv. sect. 6.



tinople was about the year 511.<sup>c</sup> But it appears, that in the time of pope Gregory the Great, the creed was not thus used in the public service of the Church of Rome: and this is mentioned as the characteristical distinction of a Church, which had hitherto been untainted by any heretical defilement.<sup>d</sup> This continued to be the case even so late as the year 1014; when there occurs an incident, remarkably illustrative of our subject: and the story has the advantage of being told by one who heard the conversation. While the emperor Henry the Second, on the occasion of his coronation, was at Rome, he wished to learn, from some of the clergy, the reason why the Romans did not chant the Creed during the Divine office: a circumstance which might naturally strike him as unusual. He was answered to this effect: "That the Church of Rome, had never been infected by any heresy, and therefore had not the same need, with other Churches, of thus manifesting its faith."<sup>e</sup> This use of the creed, among the Western Christians, seems to have originated in Spain, at the third council of Toledo, and in the year 589, on the occasion of king Reccaredus solemnly renouncing the Arian heresy, and publicly embracing the Catholic profession. At this time it was the advice of that king himself to the orthodox bishops, that in order to maintain the purity of the faith in all their churches, the same practice, as to this particular, should be adopted, which

<sup>c</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 31. Augiensis de quibusdam rebus ad c. 11. Orig. Liturg. as above. Missam pertinentibus c. 2. Ma-

<sup>d</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 36. c. 18. billon de Liturgia Gallicana, lib. 1. c. 2.

<sup>e</sup> Ibid. B. 58, c. 38. Berno



already prevailed in the East. The reason is more distinctly stated thus: "that no man for the future, should exculpate himself for ignorance of the Faith, when he learned, from the mouths of all men, what it is that the Catholic Church maintains and believes."<sup>f</sup>

Respecting Articles of Doctrine, it will appear that, as a criterion of pastoral qualification, their proper use has been recognized by the Church, on principles similar to those, which relate to Articles of Faith. The candidate for ordination would make his profession, in order to evince the soundness of that doctrine, which he undertook to preach: and the same profession would properly be renewed, whenever there might arise, any fresh exigency of danger to the Church, or any doubt of fidelity or of orthodox teaching.

Of the duty and necessity of thus employing them, abundant proof is furnished by the Scriptures, and especially by the epistles to Timothy and Titus. "Lay hands suddenly on no man," says St. Paul.<sup>g</sup> The same apostle delivers a special instruction relating to the qualification of those presbyters, whom Titus was to ordain.<sup>h</sup> So also he prescribes respecting the ordination of deacons, that they should "first be proved," and then use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.<sup>i</sup> Now it must be manifest, from the general tenor of these epistles, that such instructions would have a principal regard to soundness of faith, and a special regard also to exemption from these heretical doctrines, of which

<sup>f</sup> Mabillon, *Annal. Benedict.*  
Lib. 7. c. 59.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Tim. v. 22.    <sup>h</sup> Tit. i. 5—9.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 10.



both the contemporary existence, and the deadly quality, are manifestly discovered in these apostolical discourses: these, I say, must have been objects of prominent regard in the caution and vigilance, thus inculcated, with respect to the choice of pastors. I think it better to refer to the general examination of these writings, than to frame a more extended representation of the argument they afford. As to the general practice of the primitive Church, Dr. Waterland speaks to this effect: "Bishops generally were obliged to give an account of their faith, upon their first entrance upon the episcopate; and they had the privilege likewise, of making creeds for their respective dioceses:"<sup>k</sup> words which jointly illustrate the proper application of Articles, both of Faith and Doctrine. Again: we may refer to the fourth Council of Carthage,<sup>l</sup> held in the year 398: of the canons enacted by this synod, the first prescribes the enquiry which, previously to the ordination of a bishop, is to be made respecting his faith: this enquiry, according to the statement of Fleury, has a principal regard to the heresies, which prevailed at that time, and particularly in Africa. The canon, thus referred to, is an instructive example of duty, and an edifying monument of Christian antiquity.<sup>m</sup> The same writer, in speaking of the usages of the Gallican Church, relating to the ordination of a bishop,<sup>n</sup> specifies a doctrinal examination, in which the principal heresies are distinctly noted by the most precise language, which the

<sup>k</sup> Critical History of the Athanasian Creed, ch. 8.

<sup>l</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 20. c. 32.

<sup>m</sup> Concil. Labbe and Cossart. Tom. 2. 1198.

<sup>n</sup> Institution au droit Ecclesiastique, c. 11.



Church has employed for the condemnation of them ; and we gather from the same authority, that a similar precaution was, in the same Church, observed in the ninth century, with respect to the *election* of bishops : such election being, without this proof of qualification, null and void.<sup>o</sup> If we seek examples of such articles, employed with reference, not to admission to the ministry, but to continuance in it ; we may refer to the Council of Antioch, held in the year 341 : at which, as we learn from Hilary, there was put forth by ninety-seven bishops, a creed, “ on the occasion of one of that number being suspected of erroneous tenets.”<sup>p</sup> We may also allege the case of Marcellus, of Ancyra, when asserting and maintaining his orthodoxy in a profession of faith made to Julius, bishop of Rome : which Epiphanius supposes that he may have done, in order that he might not, from the imputation of heresy, be deposed from his episcopal function.<sup>q</sup> To the same class of examples we may perhaps refer that of Pascal the second, himself a bishop of Rome : which occurs in the Council of Lateran, held in the year 1112. At this council Pascal, though said to have been overruled in his desire of abdicating the papal dignity, did not however disdain to clear himself, by a solemn profession of doctrine, from the suspicion of heresy.<sup>r</sup> The case of Nestorius has been already alleged, in a manner, which sufficiently indicates its application to the present point : and those of Paul of Samosata and of the Arian bishops, with

<sup>o</sup> Ibid. c. 10.

tiret. Hil. de Synod. c. 28.

<sup>p</sup> Cum in suspicionem venisset  
unis ex episcopis quod prava sen-

<sup>q</sup> Epiph. Haer. lxxii. c. 1—4.

<sup>r</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 66. c. 12.



many others, carry with them the same application, and concur to exemplify the practice of the Church, in scrutinizing the doctrine of its pastors, and in imposing silence on those who are unsound.

It requires to be noted in conclusion, that the judgment of the primitive Church, in the case of an heretical pastor, uniformly involved, if I mistake not, not only a deposition from the clerical function, but also, a total excommunication.<sup>s</sup> This practice would seem to be grounded on a true and certain principle: for the error which was thus contrary to a sound doctrine, would also be contrary to a sound faith, and therefore incompatible with Christian communion. And indeed, the case will be found to have been determined by the judgment of St. Paul: which very judgment is, in the case of Arius, solemnly alleged and applied to the excommunication of that heretic, by his bishop Alexander.<sup>t</sup> “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be anathematized.”<sup>u</sup> This apostle may not unreasonably be considered as speaking to the same effect, when we find him laying this injunction on a bishop: an injunction which is, in like manner, by the above-named Alexander, applied to the case of Arius.<sup>x</sup> “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord

<sup>s</sup> “L’heresie est punie des plus grandes peines canoniques: de la deposition pour les clercs, de l’excommunication *pour tous* ;” &c. Fleury’s Institution au Droit Ecclesiastique, iii. part. c. 8.

<sup>t</sup> Fleury’s Eccl. Hist. B. 10. c. 30. Theodoriti Eccl. Hist. I. 4.

<sup>u</sup> Gal. i. 9. See the Supplementary Remarks.

<sup>x</sup> Theodorus, *ibid.*



Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness :—from such withdraw thyself.”<sup>y</sup>

Articles of Faith and of Doctrine may probably, in the sequel of this work, be little referred to in their differential character. It will therefore not be amiss, if I now say a few words relating to the distinction of them. It is certain, that every Article of Faith is also an Article of Doctrine : for the former is designed to repel any infringement of the faith, and such infringement would involve, in the teachers of that faith, a greatly aggravated measure of peril and malignity. It is equally true, in one sense of the term, that every Article of Doctrine is an Article of Faith : for the Church has no power to create any new Article of Faith, neither has it any power to impose, among the obligations of doctrine, any thing which is not a part of the faith. Such I say, is the case with respect to one sense of the term : but this is not that sense, with which we are, at this time, concerned. For Articles of Faith are now treated of, not as verities essentially true, but as verities, enunciated in language and imposed as terms of communion. This difference will be a guide to the practical distinction between the two kinds of articles : according to which distinction, Articles of Faith are always imposed as Articles of Doctrine ; but the latter are not, distinctively considered, imposed in formal terms as Articles of Faith. For Articles of Doctrine, will often relate to matters, in which, respecting the faith of the laity, no danger exists, and therefore no security is required : and the indefinite enlargement of terms of communion, so as

<sup>y</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 3—5.



to embrace every ecclesiastical condemnation of error, being not necessary, would moreover, be highly inconvenient and pernicious. It will many times be necessary, that the Church should declare its judgment on specific theological statements; but it is unnecessary and unadvisable, to require, in all such cases, the explicit assent and acquiescence of Christians in general. For these statements will often be unavoidably such, as ordinary men cannot understand: and there would hence arise such extended and voluminous creeds, as would be quite incompatible with any proper, or even possible, methods of popular instruction.



## CHAPTER X.

## ON THE METHODS OF THAT EMPLOYMENT.

**W**E are to consider then, that it is the object of Articles of Faith, to drive away from the Church those doctrines, which are entertained indeed by nominal Christians, but which in reality, are entirely destructive of the Christian religion. The authority of the Church is to be regarded in this case, as if the voice of its pastors thus spoke to the misbeliever: "The promise of salvation belongs only to the Doctrine of Christ: you hold a doctrine, quite repugnant to that of Christ and entirely subversive of it; it is plain then, that you have neither part nor lot in this matter: should I tell you otherwise, I should destroy my own soul by unfaithfulness, and yours by deceit." To prevaricate in such a matter could do no good to the soul of him, who is thus excluded from the Church. What indeed would be the true state of the case, if such a man were either admitted to the fold, or retained in it? The Church has no commission to this purpose: the Church can bind or loose, only according to the will of God: the Church is only ministerial to "him, that hath the key of David; him



that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”<sup>z</sup> If such a man therefore were suffered, in outward form, to be within the pale of the Church; he would not the more, on that account, be within the pale of salvation: nay, he would be further from it. And what deceit could be more cruel, than to deceive in such a matter? a matter involving salvation and eternity. To make the blind go out of his way, might possibly be followed by destruction to this present life: but the guilt of so doing would be slender, when compared with that which we now contemplate. For the misbeliever, thus beguiled in understanding and conscience, might very probably *find* the right way, if he were not made to believe, that he is already *in* it: but he certainly will never think of changing his path, while he entertains a perfect confidence in that which he has chosen.

The end proposed is, that of separating the true Christianity, which will save men’s souls, from the false and counterfeit Christianity, which will destroy them. In doing this, there are two methods upon which the Church has acted.

Of these methods, one is, to demand an explicit denial or retractation of the false tenet. Of this, in its simple form, and in its application to laymen, examples are not, I think, common in the early Church: perhaps we may reckon as an instance of it, one which occurs at the Council of Ephesus, and which relates to persons, either infected with, or suspected of, the Massalian heresy.<sup>a</sup> The form in

<sup>z</sup> Rev. iii. 7.

<sup>a</sup> Fleury’s Eccl. Hist. B. 25. c. 58.



which this method more commonly occurs to us, is, when the false tenet is not only renounced, but proscribed. We may take an example from the Council of Orange, held in the year 529. At this assembly, a censure is pronounced on a doctrine, which was then, as I conceive, of recent introduction; namely, *that some men are, by the Divine power, predestinated to evil*: which doctrine is here renounced and condemned under an anathema, or judgment of excommunication. Now the anathema of the Church is grounded on this principle; namely, that the error is destructive of that faith to which God has promised salvation: and the effect of it is, to separate the misbeliever from the communion of the Church. Respecting such a proceeding, it is always to be understood and borne in mind, that if the error be really entertained, and the quality of it be that, which is here supposed; the case of the excommunicated is one, in which the rulers of the Church have no authority to retain him in communion, and cannot, without perfidy, refrain from excluding him. This results from the very nature and terms of their commission. The meaning of the word *anathema* is well illustrated in the formulary, set forth under the name of the Council of Sardica; which was held in the year 347. In this document, the decrees relating to the faith, are so framed, as to lead us to attach an import, perfectly equivalent and synonymous, to the two following forms of language: so that when it is said, that “the Church anathematizes the maintainer of such an opinion,” the same thing is meant, as if it were said, that “the



Church considers him as an alien from its community.”<sup>b</sup>

The other method is, that of exacting a contradiction of the false principle. That this is effectual to the purpose, will plainly appear from considering, that the contradiction of falsehood must be true; so that heresy is thus effectually denied and repudiated. That it is fair and reasonable, will be equally manifest; because no conscientious man would refuse, in such a case, to contradict an opinion, which he really believes to be false. Of this method, examples are found in all the present creeds of our Church, and indeed no other form is discovered in them. The following may serve for an instance. Some of the ancient heretics<sup>c</sup> maintained with Basilides, that our Saviour had no real body, that he never suffered crucifixion, and that it was Simon the Cyrenian who really suffered in the form of him. This error was renounced in the words which declare of Jesus Christ, “that he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.”

<sup>b</sup> Of the two forms of words, one is, *ANATHEMATIZAT sancta et catholica Ecclesia*; and the other, equivalent to it, *ALIENOS NOVIT sancta et catholica Ecclesia*. Hilar. de. Synod. c. 34. A similar elucidation is afforded in the first two anathematisms subjoined to the Creed of Sirmium, which was framed against Photinus. Ibid. c. 38. It is to be noted respecting both these formularies, that, although in the treatise above re-

ferred to, considerable stress is laid upon them by Hilary; yet neither of them, as ecclesiastical documents, is free from objection: still I can hardly forbear from taking it for granted, that no man would refuse to take them, in point of language, as competent authorities for explaining, like the examples of a dictionary, the meaning of a word.

<sup>c</sup> Epiph. Haer. xxiv. c. 3.



Of these forms we will, for the sake of distinction, denote the first by the term *renunciative*, and the second by the term *contradictory*. Respecting the use of them we may notice the following peculiarities.

The renunciative form is sometimes accompanied by an anathema: by virtue of which, it not only declares the falsehood of the heretical tenet, but also separates the holder of it from the communion of the Church, and thus declares that tenet to be inconsistent with salvation.<sup>d</sup>

Again: the renunciative and the contradictory forms are very commonly combined. Thus, the Church at once both pronounces, in the form of negation, the falsehood of the principle which it condemns, and declares its own positive judgment on the subject. After this form, the faculty of theology at Paris, in the year 1716, in its cognizance of a certain theological treatise, not only passes judgment of condemnation on statements, therein contained, of doctrine alleged to be unsound, but also asserts, in contradiction thereof, a positive declaration. The case is referred to, only on account of the *illustration* which it affords, in the reason, which is thus stated, of this procedure. "After having dissipated the darkness of error; to the end that the truths of Christianity may be explained and preserved in their purity, the sacred faculty hath judged it proper to declare, WHAT is her doctrine concerning the matter in debate."<sup>e</sup> And the practice of anti-

<sup>d</sup> See Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. ii. §. 1.      <sup>e</sup> Dupin's shorter Hist. of the Church, cent. 17. ch. 33. vol. 4. page 270. Lond. 1724.



quity was, I believe, faithfully reported at the Council of Trent, to this effect; that the ancient councils had always both enunciated the orthodox judgment, and condemned the contrary.<sup>f</sup> As an example, I will first refer to the Council of Nice. The creed of this council I have already given: but it is to be observed, that the creed is not the whole of the formulary, but that, after the positive statement, there is annexed a condemnation of the propositions of Arius. This condemnation runs to the following effect.

“BUT AS TO THEM WHO SAY, RESPECTING THE SON OF GOD, THAT THERE WAS A TIME WHEN HE WAS NOT, OR THAT HE WAS NOT BEFORE HE WAS BEGOTTEN, OR THAT HE WAS MADE OF NOTHING, OR WHO SAY, THAT HE IS OF A DIFFERENT SUBSTANCE OR ESSENCE, OR THAT HE IS CREATED, OR CHANGEABLE OR ALTERABLE: THEM THE CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLICAL CHURCH OF GOD ANATHEMATIZES.”<sup>g</sup>

Thus the creed, together with the anathemas, composes the entire formulary: the creed declaring, for the contradiction of heresy, what is the positive doctrine; and the anathemas, explicitly renouncing and condemning the heresy.

Of the two forms, the renunciative is more commonly discovered in the formal decrees of the Church, such as have from time to time been pronounced by ecclesiastical synods: and it is then accompanied by an authoritative condemnation, in the form of an anathema.

<sup>f</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 147. c. 8.

<sup>g</sup> Socr. Hist. i. 8.



But the contradictory form is that more commonly employed for the profession of the true faith on the part of laymen. In this proceeding, the Church becomes protected against a deadly error, on the part of its communicants, by exacting a profession of the contrary truth. Thus it is not required that a man should say in formal terms: "I renounce the doctrine, which denies Almighty God to be the Creator of the world:" but instead of this, he professes to believe in God, as the "Maker of Heaven and Earth:" in which latter form, the former is involved. Again, he does not *in formal terms* renounce the dreadful impieties of Arius: but he does in effect renounce these impieties by declaring, that he believes in Jesus Christ, as "being of one substance with the Father."

That this is the proper form for such cases, will readily appear. For, in the first place, with respect to the authoritative judgment of theological propositions; it is certain, that this appertains not to private Christians, but to the pastors of the Church. Then again, if you consider the anathema connected with this judgment; neither does the infliction of this belong to laymen: for it is their duty to hold communion with all, who are not separated from it by the authority of the Church. But there is another strong consideration; namely, that the other form, as a general criterion of fitness for Church communion, is impracticable. For if you consider the vast multitude of deadly errors, which have, in various ages, infested the Church: how would it be possible, in ascertaining the qualifications for baptism



and communion, to go through the recital? What catechumen could understand such a recital? What clergyman could explain it? It would appear, according to a remark of King James the first, that on this footing, he must carry his creed, not in his head, but in his pocket-book:<sup>n</sup> and the only fault of this remark is, that the statement is below the reality: for in truth, his pocket-book must have been larger than any two strong men can carry. If, on the other hand you consider the nature of the contradictory form: you will find, that it prescribes, in opposition to falsehood, a short affirmative truth, and that this short truth is of such power, that the number of errors, thus repelled, is almost infinite. For example: during the hottest rage of Arianism, from the time of Constantine the Great to that of Theodosius the Great, there were put forth many various forms of erroneous doctrine relating to the Son of God; as also were, a vast multitude of creeds, composed with a view to the support and propagation of similar varieties of falsehood: but all these, manifold and voluminous as they are, will be virtually renounced by that one short clause of the Nicene Creed, which declares, that *the Son is of one substance with the Father*. It was not therefore, on the part of the Council of Ariminum, without reason, that the Nicene Creed is extolled, not merely as having been the sole effectual means to crush the heresy of Arius; but also as the instrument, by which not only that heresy, but all the other [subsequent]

<sup>n</sup> Collier's Eccl. Hist. vol. ii. page 677.



heresies, had been suppressed.<sup>i</sup> And in like manner Leo the Great, bishop of Rome, after reciting three clauses of a creed, speaks of them, as sufficient for the subversion of almost every heresy: speaking, as I suppose, with a limited reference to the heresies of his own time.<sup>k</sup> Such is the great simplicity of truth, and so brief the expression it requires! while falsehood has a boundless range and an endless variety of form. One short sentence may thus suffice to overthrow as much heresy, as would fill a volume. As I feel it most important that this matter should be made as clear as possible: I will, add one more illustration. How many long discourses and volumes have been written, in support of Sabellian, Arian, Semiarian, and Socinian tenets! Here would be enough to fill, perhaps, an extensive library. Now if, in the case of any individual, and with respect to all these erroneous tenets and discourses, you would provide a security for soundness in the faith: that security would be fully obtained by a creed, containing these few words: provided only, that the profession should be made, without equivocation or mental reservation, according to the sense of the primitive Church: “I believe in God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

Such is the force of affirmative language, when thus employed. It will be no disadvantage to my subject if I remark, that Formularies of Faith are not

<sup>i</sup> Ἦτις ἀντιπαλὸς μὴ καὶ οὐκ ἐστὶν  
τῆς Ἀρείου αἵρεσεως ὑπῆρξε. δι’ ἧς οὐ  
μόνον αὐτὴ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ αἵρεσεις  
καθῆρεθησαν. Socr. Hist. ii. 37.

<sup>k</sup> Fleury’s Eccl. Hist. B. 27.

c. 35. Leonis Magni Ep. 24. c.  
2. ed. 1675. “Quibus tribus sen-  
tentiis omnium fere hæreticorum  
machinæ destruuntur.”



the only discourses in which this appears: there is little doubt that the Holy Scriptures contain many passages of the same description. I will select the following, which, according to the exposition of Bishop Bull, would appear to be an example of it. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."<sup>1</sup> These are the words of St. John: whose Gospel was written, not only generally, for the edification of the Church, but also, specially, with a view to the condemnation of heresies. Now this one sentence involves a contradiction of all the various heretics whatever, who were contemporary with the evangelist. For all of these may be divided into two classes: one of whom denied the humanity of our Lord, and the other his Deity; while neither of them admitted, *that the word was made flesh*. Such is the exposition of the great writer I have named;<sup>m</sup> who herein echoes the voice of Irenæus,<sup>n</sup> speaking to us at a time, not far remote from the life of St. John himself, and after being taught by Polycarp, who had been a companion of that evangelist.

There is however, one proper use of the renunciative form, when taken by itself and uncombined with the other. This relates to certain doctrines, which, though they go not to the full extent of subverting the faith, are nevertheless without warrant of truth. Such doctrines a man may be called upon

<sup>1</sup> John i. 14.

<sup>m</sup> Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. 2. §. 4.

<sup>n</sup> Secundum autem nullam

sententiam hæreticorum, Verbum Dei caro factum est. Iren. lib. iii. c. 11.



to renounce, because they are dangerous, and yet not called upon to contradict; because in truth there is no scriptural warrant either to affirm, or to deny, or in any way to speak decisively on the subject. We may refer, for sake of explanation, to certain useless questions; which, inasmuch as scripture affords no grounds of decision, it is impossible for man to decide. Take for example the following: What was the name of the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden? Again: If Eve only had transgressed and not Adam, how would their posterity have been affected with regard to original sin? Again: Can an angel move from one place to another, without passing through the space between? On questions such as these men have pronounced their decisions. Respecting such decisions, and other similar opinions, the proper judgment of the Church is, that of retractation and silence. It is plain, that such questions are exceedingly sinful in more respects than one: for they involve a waste of that time, which must be accounted for, and which ought to be employed in good works; and they are presumptuous, inasmuch as man thus arrogates to decide, what God only can.

We see then the different characters of these two forms. In the renunciative, the Church defines the error which is to be renounced; in the contradictory, it exacts the profession of the contrary truth. We have seen that there are cases, in which one only of these forms can properly be applied. It remains to say a few words respecting the employment of them both conjunctively. From this there results one great advantage, which is, in the



wording of such formularies, supremely important : and that is, clearness. To put forth the heretical position which calls for contradiction, is a clue, for the solution of doubt respecting the meaning of the contradiction ; being thus, as a guide to interpretation, of similar use with the preamble of a law. And on the other hand, inasmuch as it frequently happens, that an heretical doctrine is worded with studious equivocation, being capable of a good sense, but designed to propagate a bad one : it will be seen, that this subterfuge may be taken away by imposing the contradictory proposition : because this proposition ought, in such a case, to be so expressed, as to exclude, by language quite unambiguous, the heretical meaning. As an example, we may refer to the words of Hilary respecting the Oriental bishops, and the Articles of Faith which they decreed : he speaks to this effect : “that the bishops endeavoured to contravene all the subtleties of the heretics, *according to that sense in which themselves understood [them.]*”<sup>o</sup> And this will appear the more necessary, if we refer to a character which has been given, of heretical and heterodox professions, and which, generally speaking, involves, I believe, a very true description : that, “they conceal within themselves their vicious quality, so that nothing faulty appears upon the surface.”<sup>p</sup> Hence

<sup>o</sup> Quibus studii fuit, ut *secundum intelligentiæ suæ sensum* omnibus hæreticorum artibus contrairent. De Synod. c. 10. occur, as a part of Hilary’s treatise, De Synodis, at the 290th page of the Basle edition of 1535 : they are, in later editions, rejected

<sup>p</sup> Expositiones omnes, si quid habent criminis, *intra se habent : cæterum non habere in publica facie existimantur.* The words as spurious ; with very doubtful propriety, as I think. But the authority of Hilary is not very material to my present purpose.



it will follow, that the decisions of the Church, in order to the security of the faith, must strike, not at the words, which perhaps may be blameless ; but at the heresy, which is so often disguised by equivocation, or eluded by silence. This may serve to explain, why, according to a previous remark, the simple form of renunciation has been so seldom employed ; and why a preference has so commonly been given to the contradictory form, whether taken by itself or combined with the other. Lastly : it is agreed by honourable men, that Articles of Religion are to be subscribed, according to the sense of him who imposes them : but the question will sometimes arise, What is that sense ? and the most effectual means of answering it, will be provided, by combining these two forms. If there be a doubt respecting the meaning of the tenet you desire to impose ; that doubt will be removed, by a distinct view of the tenet you desire to reject. Of this a memorable example is provided by the Council of Nice. When that council asserts, *that the Son of God is consubstantial with the Father* : it employs no other language, than what Paul of Samosata, in the expression of a dreadful heresy, would not have hesitated to subscribe :<sup>a</sup> but the meaning is, according to the representation of Athanasius, fixed and ascertained, by a citation of the tenets of Arius, which are subjoined in the anathema : and indeed, the language of that great writer is even strong enough to say, that those tenets are subjoined for the express purpose of thus fixing and ascertaining

<sup>a</sup> See Hilary de Synod. cc. 81. and 86. Male homousion Samosatenus confessus est.



the sense, which is imposed in the language of the creed.<sup>r</sup> And Hilary, in communicating certain Articles of Faith, decreed by the Oriental bishops, thinks it proper to prefix at length the copy of an Arian formulary, to the doctrine of which those articles are opposed: which he professed to do, *in order that the articles themselves may be better understood.*<sup>s</sup>

It follows almost as a consequence of my last remarks, that Articles of Faith and of Doctrine ought to define nothing more than what is required by necessity. It is plain, that beyond this, there is no longer the same clue to their meaning. And as to teaching Christianity, if that be your aim, you require not the aid of these enunciated Articles of Faith, any further than those points only, on which its truth has been violated: we ought therefore to define nothing more, than is required in order to the contradiction of error. The rest, being obscure, will yield no support to truth, but on the other hand, being misunderstood, will be very likely to engender contention. And especially ought this law to be observed, that the Church, in her formularies, must define nothing but what the Scriptures have defined: there must here be no employment of positions, for which we derive our evidence, partly from prophets and apostles, and partly from Aristotle: nay, even the Holy Fathers of the

<sup>r</sup> See the passage extracted in Bull's Def. Fid. Nic. Sect. ii. c. 1. §. 3. together with the remarks of that writer as far as the end of the chapter.

<sup>s</sup> De Synod. c. 10. Ipsam autem ex solido impiissimæ blasphemæ pestem invitatus licet subdidi, ut responsionum, quæ e diverso ab Orientalibus positæ sunt, absolutius et virtus et ratio nosceretur.



Church are to have no other authority, than as they yield legitimate evidence for ascertaining the true signification of the oracles of God. “Non præceptis,” says Hilary, “aliquid addendum est, sed modus est constituendus audaciæ.”<sup>t</sup> By which words I understand him to counsel to this effect: “We must not add any thing to the precepts of the written word: but we must impose restraint and silence on the darings of heresy, and we must do nothing more.” We have seen it noted as a fault in the Council of Trent, that it called upon men to subscribe scholastic opinions. We may add, as a passage not void of illustration to our present subject, the following statement of the principles observed in the composition of the Articles of the Church of England. But I beg it to be observed, that I now refer to it merely as an example for the illustration of my remarks: the vindication of these articles, considered in themselves and with reference to their contents, is not the point with which I am at present engaged. By this representation of three English prelates, I understand it to be asserted respecting the Church of England; that when it was reformed from the superstitious opinions of the Church of Rome, it repudiated [only] those errors which were manifest and dangerous, and declined an undue officiousness in meddling with scholastical points. “The cause,” it is said, “why she held this moderation, was, because she could not be able to preserve any unity amongst Christians, if men were forced to subscribe to curious particulars disputed

<sup>t</sup> De Trin. lib ii. c. 5.



in schools.”<sup>u</sup> If this representation be true, the Church of England may be well contended to appropriate, as a bright encomium, the reproach, which has been thrown upon her by certain Romanists, of “an ablative or negative religion:”<sup>v</sup> and the value of such a testimony will be much enhanced, on a general view of the foregoing considerations.

<sup>u</sup> Letter of three bishops to the Duke of Buckingham, in the case of Mr. Mountague. Collier’s Eccl. Hist. vol. ii. page 734.  
<sup>v</sup> Bishop Hall’s Old Religion, Chap. 3.



## CHAPTER XI.

ON THE RIGHT INTERPRETATION OF ARTICLES OF FAITH  
AND DOCTRINE.

**A**FTER considering our formularies with respect to the proper modes of employment and expression, our attention will properly be due to the principles on which they ought to be understood.

As these formularies are terms or conditions, relating either to Church communion or to pastoral qualification; they must be viewed in the same light of moral obligation, which regulates every conditional engagement between man and man. He who accepts the condition, must take the language of it in that sense, which he believes to be intended by him who imposes it. It will obviously follow that, in the interpretation of ecclesiastical formularies, we are bound to embrace them, in that sense only, in which we believe that the Church has imposed them.

And how is this sense to be discovered? This must be, with reference to the occasion and the reasons, connected with the framing of the language. "The meaning of words," says Hilary, "must be gathered



from the motives of employing them.”<sup>x</sup> This is a good principle relating to the construction of language in general : it is, with great propriety, applied by this writer to the exposition of scripture : and it is peculiarly applicable to formularies, such as those of which we now treat ; in which scarcely any thing is laid down in the form of abstract and irrespective truth, but almost every word has been dictated by some peculiar exigency, and applies to nothing else. We have contended moreover, with respect to these formularies, that almost every word has a pointed force of contradiction. On this view, it must appear that, whenever we inquire into the meaning of any Article of Faith, it ought to be considered as a point of supreme importance, to put the question : WHAT WAS THIS ARTICLE MEANT TO CONTRADICT ? We shall thus be enabled to answer the question : What was this article intended to TEACH ? The language of it cannot be rightly understood, without a reference to the heresy against which it was employed. To such knowledge the proper avenues will present themselves, in history, and in the writings of those, by whom the subject matter and occasion are unfolded, especially of those who lived in or near the time, when the article was first imposed : and it is to sources of information, such as these, that we must repair, if we would avail ourselves of the only evidence which is, in its own nature, pertinent to the subject and conducive to the point.

If you would see this forcibly illustrated, you

<sup>x</sup> *Intelligentia enim dictorum sermo subjectus. De Trin. lib. ex causis est assumenda dicendi : iv. c. 14. quia non sermoni res, sed rei est*



need only refer to the two remarkable cases of Paul of Samosata, and of Arius. The point with which we are here concerned is, the use of the word *Consubstantial*, as it occurs in stating the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. In the one instance, you find the orthodox fathers of the Council of Antioch, in abhorrence of the heresy of Paul, suppressing this word *consubstantial*; in the other, you find the Nicene bishops, in a sense opposed to the Arian blasphemies, asserting, that the Son of God is consubstantial with the Father. The fathers of Antioch so spoke of the word, as they understood it from Paul: they were wholly intent upon destroying what he had advanced, and upon teaching, that the Son of God was before all things, and that he was not, from being man, made God.<sup>y</sup> The Nicene Fathers, on the other hand, spoke in contradiction of the Arians; who blasphemously spoke of the Son of God as a creature, and denied the natural and essential unity of the Father and the Son, asserting that unity to be only of concord, not of Godhead:<sup>z</sup> it is to be added that the Arians, in the enunciation of their doctrine, had spoken of our Saviour as a being entirely separate and distinct from the substance of God."<sup>a</sup> It is foreign to my present purpose to proceed with relating the dreadful impieties, which they combined with this doctrine. We will now return to the consideration of our general rule.

<sup>y</sup> Bull's Def. Fid. Nic. Sect. ii. Arians are thus given by Alexander, bishop of Alexandria: c. i. §. 10. The statement of Bull is from Athanasius.

<sup>z</sup> Ibid. et §. 3. ejusdem cap. Ξενος τε και αλλοτριος, και απεσχοιμισ-

<sup>a</sup> The words of the primitive μενος, εστιν ο Λογος, της του Θεου  
ΟΥΣΙΑΣ. Socratis Hist. i. 6.



It is plain, that every departure from this rule must involve great danger, if not complete certainty, of equivocation. It is equally true, that all equivocation, relating to such matters, whether it spring from mistake or from duplicity, must carry us away from the purpose and meaning of the Church, relating to the rule of salvation. What shall we say then of the following? We are required to believe "in the Holy Catholic Church." Now it has of late years been very common to interpret this article to mean, by the Catholic Church, *all persons whatever of all denominations of professing Christians*. It is very certain, that the framers of this creed had no such notion of the term; and the creed itself had been, to the best of my knowledge, above a thousand years in existence, before any one took it into his head to affix such a meaning to it: for the notion, as far as I have been able to discover, was first started no earlier than 1589, and then, in the discourse of a person, who seems to have been, at the time, little better than a madman.<sup>b</sup> Again, this same article is by Luther made to signify, the number of the predestinated:<sup>c</sup> and, though Luther declared himself ready to suffer martyrdom rather than retract his exposition, this will not prove the exposition true: it is nevertheless certain, or at least beyond all reasonable doubt, respecting those who inserted these words in the creed, that they knew nothing about Luther's doctrine of predestination. Another creed speaks after this manner: "One holy Catholic and Apostolic Church." Now these words are claimed by Ignatius Loyala to sig-

<sup>b</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 179. c. 21.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid. b. 127. c. 12.



nify, respecting the one only Church, that no man can be a member of it, who is not in communion with the Roman pontiff.<sup>d</sup> But the question is: Was this the meaning intended by the Second General Council? for it was by them that this article was placed among the terms of Communion. There is no man, I presume, competent to answer this question, who would, for a moment hesitate to deny the exposition of Loyola. Nor do I think it would involve any temerity of judgment, if it were even maintained, that the doctrinal position, thus fastened upon a Catholic and orthodox profession, would, in that age, have been deemed a heresy, similar to those of the Donatists and Novatians, and fit only for the anathema of the Church.

Another fault of interpretation is, that of certain divines, who will take a particular expression of a creed; enumerate and recite all the manifold significations, in which they conceive this expression to be true; and then contend for all these various significations, as the meaning of the Church: whereas, on the right view, it will appear, that such expression has but one meaning; that this meaning is to be gathered from a regard to the falsehood which it confronts; and that it relates to some specific occasion, such as history must explain. As an example of this, I will refer to bishop Pearson's exposition. By the Apostles' Creed, we are taught to profess: "I believe in God the Father." Now the question is this: What is the import of the word "Father?" In the present instance, there

<sup>d</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 151. c. 67.



are seven modes of explanation. By these, severally, the idea of paternity is founded upon, first, creation; secondly, conservation; thirdly, redemption; fourthly, regeneration; fifthly, resurrection; sixthly, adoption; and lastly, that relation, in which God is spoken of as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now with respect to the first six, they are remote from the purpose intended. In saying thus, I am advancing a position, which I conceive will never be disputed, by any theologian of competent knowledge and judgment. But if it be disputed; I will, for my authority, appeal to this wise and learned prelate himself: who, with respect to the seventh of these significations, speaks thus: "I conceive this, as the most eminent notion of God's paternity, so *the original and proper explication of this article of the creed*: and that, not only because *the ancient fathers deliver no other exposition of it*; but also, because that which I conceive to be the first occasion, rise, and original of the creed itself, requireth this as the proper interpretation."<sup>e</sup> This may serve as an example of this great writer's mode of handling his subject: at the same time it is acknowledged, that the word Father, here selected, is one of those very few words in the creed, which, as it will appear afterwards, are not supposed by me, to carry any import of contradiction. But I will now advert to others, which, as I contend, do carry that import. And here I will remark, in the first place, that this principle of faulty interpretation is, by some persons, carried so very far; that you must not wonder,

\* Pearson's Exposition, page 55. ed. 1797.



if, among the many possible significations affixed to a certain form of words, you should occasionally find, that the real meaning is omitted. As an example, we may refer to the same learned writer, for his explanation of the Article of Faith contained in these words: "the communion of saints." Under this article, he brings out to view, seven modes of communion, which he ascribes to the saints: all which I believe to be quite irrelevant to the purpose. But the learned prelate shall speak for himself: it is thus he sums up his own doctrine.

"Every one may learn from hence what he is to understand by this part of the article, in which he professeth to believe *the communion of saints*; for thereby he is conceived to express thus much: I am fully persuaded of this as of a necessary and infallible truth, that such persons as are truly sanctified in the Church of Christ, while they live among the crooked generations of men, and struggle with all the miseries of this world, have fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, as dwelling with them, and taking up their habitations in them: that they partake of the care and kindness of the blessed angels, who take delight in the ministration for their benefit: that beside the external fellowship which they have in the word and sacraments with all the members of the Church, they have an intimate union and conjunction with all the saints on earth as the living members of Christ; nor is this union separated by the death of any; but as Christ, in whom they live, is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, so have they fellowship with all the saints,



which, from the death of Abel, have ever departed in the true faith and fear of God, and now enjoy the presence of the Father, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. And thus I believe *the communion of saints*."

Now if this article be investigated by the only safe clue, I mean, by that of history and chronology: it will, I think, satisfactorily appear, that all this is quite wide of the mark, and that the words, with regard to the right explanation of them, are left just where they were at first. For, as Lord King observes, and I think truly, "the introduction of this clause was occasioned by the Donatists;"<sup>f</sup> schismatics, who separated, on an unwarrantable ground, from the Catholic Church: the creed therefore declares the unlawfulness of such separation, and the contrary obligation, of maintaining an Eucharistical Communion with all the members of the Catholic body. As to the word *Saints*; I conceive the bishop to be greatly in error, when he supposes it to be limited to those Christians, who are truly pious: it seems to me, more in agreement with Lord King, to denote the whole community of Christians in general; in the same sense with St. Paul, when he addresses his epistles to the saints at Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse, that is, to the societies of Christians in those places. The article, thus standing as a term of communion, declares, that a state of wilful schism is incompatible with salvation. The use and necessity of it may have related to one, or both, of these two purposes. First, it may have been meant as a security, in the

<sup>f</sup> Hist. of the Apostles' Creed, page 347. ed. 1719.



case of repentant schismatics, desiring admission into the Catholic Communion: from them it would exact a renunciation of the heresy, on which their schism was grounded, and it would thus prevent them, until truly converted, from receiving a sacrament, which the Church, to men living in wilful sin, had no lawful power to give. Secondly, it might be designed, by exacting an avowal of the guilt of schism, to guard the faithful from lapsing, either into the schism of the Donatists, or into any similar state of separation from the Catholic Church. The words cannot I think be better explained, than by taking as a paraphrase of them, Augustine's reprehension of these schismatics: observing that the date of this reprehension is earlier, and possibly *very little* earlier, than that of the first insertion of this clause into the Apostles' Creed. After speaking of the Donatists as disturbers of the Church, who were for separating the tares from the wheat before the due time; and who, by their blind delusion, were excommunicating themselves rather than those from whom they separated: he thus addresses them: "Even though the persons, on account of whom you have abandoned the Church, had been bad men: it was nevertheless your duty, to remain in the Church, and to endure those, whom you had no power whatever either to reform or to excommunicate."<sup>g</sup>

Here I wish to obviate a possible objection. The

<sup>g</sup> Etiamsi mali fuissent propter quos in Ecclesia non estis, vos tamen, eos ferendo quos emendare aut segregare minime poteratis, in Ecclesia permanere debuistis. Aug. Lib. de Fide et Operibus, c. 6.



heresy of the Donatists consisted in maintaining, *that the administrations of the Church are rendered void by the sinfulness of the minister*: and it may be thought, that this opinion is too precise and definite, to admit the supposition of its being renounced in a form, so very simple and general as these few words, “The Communion of Saints.”

But I will observe, that the primitive creeds seem originally to have been worded with so much simplicity, that they conveyed, as it were, a symbolum or token, rather than a *definition*, of the true faith. Nor would any inconvenience arise from this: because, however general the expressions, thus employed in formularies, which, being intended for memory, must of necessity be brief;<sup>b</sup> I conceive that there was no defect, as to clearness and fulness of information, respecting the doctrines folded up in this brevity of language: these latter being explained in all their fulness of detail, by the catechetical instructions afforded by the ancient Church. This may be found exemplified in the catechetical discourses of Cyril of Jerusalem: in which, while the creed is short and simple, the explanations are copious, respecting both the doctrines to be embraced, and the heresies to be avoided. The general principle relating to this point, is so laid down by Augustine, that the proper employment of creeds presupposes the concomitant use of copious explanations. His words are so applicable, that I will

<sup>b</sup> This reason for the brevity of creeds is assigned by Augustine: *De Symbolo Sermo ad Catechumenos*, c. 1. *Ne tardorum hominum memoria laboraret; ut omnis homo possit dicere, possit tenere, quod credit.*



give an abbreviated view of them. “Est autem catholica fides in Symbolo nota fidelibus, memoriaeque mandata, quanta res passa est brevitate sermonis : ut *paucis verbis credendum constitueretur, quod multis verbis exponendum esset* proficientibus et ad Divinam doctrinam surgentibus.” By which words I understand him to speak in effect thus : “that the Catholic Faith is taught in the creed, and committed to memory, in a form of the utmost possible brevity : so as to frame an expression in few words, of that which was intended, to be explained at large during a progressive state of Christian edification.” Of these copious explanations, he proceeds to represent the value thus : that the faith of the creed may thereby be protected against the craft and subtlety of heretics.<sup>i</sup>

With respect to the Donatists, the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, might well, under such a mode of teaching and profession, condemn the unlawfulness of their schism ; and this would involve a condemnation of that, heretical doctrine, which I have stated above, and on which their schism was grounded. Should it be alleged, that the first use of this article is too late to entitle it to the character of the *primitive* creeds : I will again urge, that it was the equivocation of heretics, which first necessitated the use of more precise language ; and I will add, that the Church of Rome was, at this date, remarkably unsophisticated by heresy. “The enlargements of creeds,” says bishop Burnet,

<sup>i</sup> Tractatio fidei ad muniendum Symbolum valet ;——ut illa quæ in Symbolo retinentur, contra hæreticorum insidias auctoritate catholica et munitiore defensione custodiat. Lib. de Fide et Symbolo, c. 1.



“were at first occasioned by the prevarications of heretics : who having put senses favouring their opinions, to the simpler terms in which the first creeds were proposed, therefore it was thought necessary to add more express words.”<sup>k</sup>

It is much to be lamented, that this false principle runs through the whole of the bishop's exposition. It is the more remarkable, because, in treating of this very article, the principle is one, which he seems to repudiate. “It will be no way fit,” says he, “to give any other explication of these words as the sense of the creed, than what was then understood by the Church of God, when they were first inserted.”<sup>l</sup> To notice the fault, was little less than a duty. Nor do I feel it needful to say much in excuse, for thus animadverting on so great a man. However wise, and learned, and pious, still he was fallible : and the brightest excellence of man, will not justify our following it into the paths of error and mistake : it is also to be considered, that these paths, by the attraction of such excellence, become the more seductive and the more in need of indication. But I am anxious to guard against the possibility of thus depreciating, even in a single mind, the value of this treatise : for to throw disrepute on it, would in effect be, to enfeeble that sacred cause which it so powerfully maintains. My objection applies only, to a certain mode of interpreting language : but if this book be regarded, in other respects, as a vindication of the faith and of Christian verities ; its merit and usefulness are

<sup>k</sup> Exp. of the 39 Articles. Introduction.

<sup>l</sup> Pearson on the Creed, page 528. ed. 1797.



transcendently great. Notwithstanding that diffusive tint of error which I have noted, and which pervades it throughout : still it is a noble repository of wisdom ; a work bright with genius, with energy of language and vigour of argument ; framed under the advantage of erudition, such as seems, in this department, to know no limits but those of human knowledge ; and armed, in a degree rarely given to any human production, with a strong and efficacious power, for the establishment of truth, and for the suppression of infidel and unchristian doctrines. While such doctrines shall exist ; the Christian Church can ill spare the fruit of labour thus happily bestowed, of talents and eloquence thus happily exerted.

I shall not now expatiate at large, on the general faultiness of that mode of interpretation, by which language is construed as if it *does* mean almost any thing and every thing which it *can* mean. With relation to our present subject, there are various grounds, on which it is earnestly to be deprecated. First, the Catholic tradition of the Church is neutralized and destroyed in<sup>m</sup> this treatment of its authentic monuments. Secondly, almost all the obloquy which has been heaped upon these formularies, is such, as applies to them only on a false view ; which false view derives much support from this treatment of the subject. “The Creed, without controversy,” says bishop Pearson,<sup>n</sup> “is a brief comprehension of the objects of our Christian faith.” Say rather : The Creed, as it now stands, is, for the

<sup>m</sup> See the Suppl. Rem.

<sup>n</sup> Preface “To the Reader.”



most part, a form, for the renunciation of unchristian errors. Thirdly, there accrue, from such interpretation, considerable and very troublesome difficulties. For example, with respect to this very Article of the Communion of Saints; these questions may be asked. "Why was this article never inserted in the creed for the first four centuries? Why is it in the creed of the ancient Church of Rome, and not in those of Jerusalem and Antioch?" Now, on the learned prelate's view, these questions are felt by me to carry with them much embarrassment: whereas, otherwise, it is quite obvious to answer them thus: "It was not in the creed for the first four centuries, because the sect of the Donatists never existed till the fourth century; and it was peculiarly inserted in the Roman Creed, because the Roman Church was more peculiarly troubled by the vicinity of those sectarians." It may serve to illustrate still further, the great mischief of erroneous views; if I remark upon a notion, formerly entertained by the learned, and which, even now, may possibly be very prevalent among ordinary Christians: I mean the notion, that this creed was, in its primitive form, composed by the twelve Apostles. If this were so: why add to it at so late a period? Could later men mend the work of the Apostles? Can the Church impose a summary of the faith, which was given by the Apostles, and interpolated by others?

But if *you* will so expound the creed, why will you complain of the heretic, when he takes up the same line of interpretation? As to the error which I have just noticed; we may regard it as a mere



error of judgment in a good man. What then shall we say of the following? The Arians gave the name of God to Christ, because that name is also given in Scripture to men: they scrupled not to confess that Christ was truly the Son of God, because in baptism every man is made a son of God: they confessed that he existed before times and ages, because the angels did so. Again: one of these heretics teaches the following mode of interpreting an Article of Faith. Why do you scruple to say that the Son is of the Father? when the Apostle says, that all things are of God: so that you may truly affirm the Son to be of God, and yet believe him to be a creature.<sup>o</sup> The error in both cases is that of equivocation: that is, it consists in the abusive employment of words, which are capable of more than one meaning. But in the latter case, it is exceedingly malignant: involving the deceptive use of language, which is meant for security, but gives none; so that the purpose of a lie is answered, together with a subterfuge against the crimination of falsehood. There is however still one further step in the climax of guilt, and that is, mental reservation: which involves a latent meaning of the mind, different not only from the intention of words, but also from any rational signification of them. The case is one, which might more justly awaken our emotions, than provoke the labour of confutation. It is shocking to think, that there should be found, united with the Christian name, such black depravity. The very heathens might rise up against such a generation, and con-

<sup>o</sup> See the Epilogus of Bull's quotations contained in it, from Def. Fid. Nic., and especially the Hilary and Athanasius.



demn them: for these prevaricators might learn better morality from Cicero, than they *have* learned from Christ. But where can the Church go for remedy? Alas! it is a desperate folly, to be always contriving means of human provision, for fencing out the secret and artful methods of wickedness. The only adequate remedy is that of moral reformation; that which seeks to wither the root of depravity, and to purify that fountain, out of which are the issues of life: other expedients will do little more than bring forth new proof, of the great fecundity of crime in the power of evasion. Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt. It must be plainly seen, that such duplicity cuts asunder the bonds of civil society; that where there is no truth, there can be no confidence; and that where there is no confidence, there can be no safe intercourse, nor safe transaction, between man and man: the fabric of social life being thus broken down into incohesive fragments; and the state of war, which, in its mildest form, is full of crimes and misery, being unspeakably aggravated in horror: for, under this dominion of perfidy, even a merciful conqueror has it not in his power to spare the life of a captive. With respect to the bearing of this consideration on our particular subject: it may briefly be suggested, that Articles of Faith relate to the Christian covenant, and to the terms, or conditions, of Christian communion; that where there is bad faith, there can be neither covenant nor conditions; that such articles, although Christianity cannot exist without them, are thus placed on the same footing, as if there were none at



all ; in a word, that the equivocator and the liar are thus evinced to be persons, with respect to whom, the commission of a Christian pastor is without power and his pardon is a nullity. Accordingly, we find, I think, in the discipline of the ancient Church, respecting apostates, who lapsed a second time, whether into paganism or heresy ; that they were never readmitted to communion till the point of death : the ground of such judgment being, as I conceive, this ; that the profession of such persons was not to be trusted, and thus the Church could have no warrant respecting those conditions, in the absence of which its administrations are not to be dispensed. We have also, to the same effect, an instructive example, in the case of certain heretics of the sect of the Massalians. For these men, by dissimulation and perfidy, seem to have thrown themselves into a state of perpetual excommunication, and to have stopped the avenues of mercy to their own souls.<sup>p</sup> Nor perhaps, will such an instance, upon due consideration, be found to involve more than necessity would require. For it is true indeed, that the Church is, on the part of God, to dispense forgiveness of sins ; but it is only to them who repent : the Church has received no power to pardon the impenitent : the difficulty of the present case is, how repentance can be evinced by men, in whose words, most solemnly and awfully pronounced, there is no truth ; and it is obvious, that hypocrisy and worldly motives, may have as much influence, in seeking reconciliation with the Church, as, on the

<sup>p</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. B. 19. c. 26. and B. 24. c. 44. See the Suppl. Rem.



view of Augustine,<sup>1</sup> they may have in seeking admission to it. Now it is plain, that it is to faith, and not to hypocrisy, that the Christian covenant applies. It ought obviously to be felt, by men of perfidy and prevarication, that they shut themselves out from every benefit for which veracity may qualify them: and the worst of such a misfortune is this: it is little less than desperate: for even when they abjure the lawfulness of perfidy, who can tell that they are not performing one more act of perfidy?

There is, in the following representation of bishop Bull, something so just and forcible, that I cannot omit it without injustice to my subject. As I do not see the necessity, either with respect to this great prelate himself or his translator, of doing over again work already done, I will give the passage, with slight variation, from Mr. Holland's translation. I must however, for explanation, premise a few words. The Apostles' Creed contains these words: "And in Jesus Christ his only Son." Now the question to which the bishop's remarks apply is this, What is meant by the words, "His only Son?" The bishop asserts the constant and perpetual sense of all catholic doctors of the first three ages to mean by this term, a Divine Generation from God the Father before all ages; he therefore argues, that this is the *sense of the creed*. As a minor

<sup>1</sup> Si enim aliquod commodum nem aut inimicitias reformidat, expectando ab hominibus, quibus vult fieri Christianus; non fieri se aliter placitum non putat, aut vult potius quam fingere. De aliquod ab hominibus incommodum devitando, quorum offensio-



point, I must add, that by the "Roman Church" is meant the *ancient* Church of Rome: the creed of which was the same with that which we now call the Apostles' Creed. I will now proceed with the quotation.

"What would we have, then? Hath not the Roman Church plainly enough expressed that peculiar manner of Jesus Christ's filiation, concerning which Episcopus speaks in this creed? Hath she not used the very words by which all persons confess that this manner of filiation was denoted in that age and Church? *What though some modern heretic can coin a new exposition? Surely, the creeds of the Churches, are to be expounded from the sense of the Churches, and not the wild imagination of heretics. If this were once admitted, there would soon be an end of every Article of our Faith. He does not hold the creed of any Church, who does not understand it in the sense of the Church.* The author of a piece ascribed to Justin, has spoke excellently upon this head: 'It is not the bare giving glory to the Father and the Son, that is to us the means of salvation; but a sound confession of the Trinity conveys to us the enjoyment of those good things laid up for the pious. For one may hear heterodox men praising the Father and the Son, but not worshipping them in the true sense.' In like manner St. Cyprian, upon those words of Christ, 'Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:' he suggests the Trinity, into which mystery the Gentiles are baptized. But does Marcion hold this Trinity? Does he assert the same Creator, God the Father, as we



do ? One and the same Son Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary, and made flesh, &c. No, Marcion, and the other heretics, have a faith widely different from ours, nay rather, they have nothing among them but perfidy, blasphemy, and contention, the enemies of truth and holiness.

“ Thus let us also refute Episcopius and others, who would persuade us, that the Arians and Socinians are to be esteemed our brethren, because, forsooth, they receive the common creed of the Church, and profess faith in Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, as well as we. But do they believe in the same only-begotten Son of God, in which we Catholics at this day, and all the Catholic Church always believed ? No, their faith is widely different, or rather, they have none. The Church believes, and always did believe, in the only-begotten Son of God, who was begotten of God the Father before all ages, and was himself God ; such a Son of God as neither of those heresies sincerely confess. For the Arians (if you strip their notion of its vizard) have a Son of God only-begotten too, who is indeed a creature made of nothing, though more excellent than all the rest, and produced before them. The Socinians’ only-begotten Son is a mere man, not existing before his nativity of the Virgin. Both of them in word profess the faith of the Church concerning the only-begotten Son of God ; but their inward notion and sentiment is nothing else than heresy and blasphemy. Further, from what we have discoursed so largely concerning the Creed called the Apostles’, you may see the vanity, the folly, and, if you please, the matchless impudence,



of the Racovian Catechist; who boasts, 'that he and his friends believe concerning the person of Christ, only this, that he is by nature truly man, *such as the Creed, commonly called the Apostles', and embraced by all Christians in common with themselves, testifies that he is.*'"<sup>r</sup>

<sup>r</sup> Holland's Translation of bi- In the original it is Jud. Eccl.  
shop Bull's Works, vol. ii. p. 198. Cath. c. 5. §. 10.



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE SUBJECT FURTHER EXEMPLIFIED.

**I** WILL now enter on a new line of discourse : from which, as I hope, there will accrue a considerable addition of clearness and evidence.

We have already noticed the most ancient creed which we have upon record, and which comprised only these words : “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Nothing, in this instance, seems to have been required, further than a simple profession of Christianity. Nor is it meant to be contended, that this form was the only one, thus employed in those very early times. On the contrary, I would suppose, that various other forms were equally valid, and applied to the same use : provided only, that they were always understood to express a true declaration of that faith, which was demanded as the qualification for baptism.

I will now proceed to another creed. The substance of this embraces nothing more, than a profession of faith in the Holy Trinity. In point of form, we may perhaps find it varying thus : being at one time expressed in this manner ; “I believe in God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy



Ghost :” and at another time more briefly ; “ I believe in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost :” and again, being enunciated, sometimes in the way of affirmation, and sometimes in that of question and answer. As to any other slight possible variations, I deem it not necessary to notice them. But the utmost amount of such variations will leave my description unaffected in its truth, when I say, that the substance of this creed embraces nothing more than a profession of faith in the Holy Trinity.

This creed is considered to have been adapted to the very words, in which our Saviour commissioned his Apostles and instituted his Holy Baptism. Its primeval origin is a point, supported, as I think, by strong evidence, and admitted, with remarkable unanimity, by various eminent and learned men.

Episcopus says, that the most ancient of the creeds, and that which prevailed in the first administration of baptism, even from the times of the apostles, was this: he speaks of it moreover as framed *according to the form prescribed* by our Saviour Himself: “ *Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*” In this position bishop Bull, the great antagonist of Episcopus, fully concurs: while he encounters, with clear and vigorous argument, the use which Episcopus makes of it.\*

“ Immediately,” says bishop Pearson, “ before the ascension of our Saviour, he said unto his apostles, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them*

\* For the words of Episcopus, and the argument of Bull, see the Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. iv.



*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* From this sacred form of Baptism did the Church derive the Rule of Faith, requiring the profession of belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, before they could be baptized in their name.”<sup>t</sup> If this creed originated, as is thus contended, in the time of the apostles; it would seem from Cyril of Jerusalem, to have continued in use, as a baptismal creed, without any addition, till the middle of the fourth century.”<sup>u</sup>

I will here add the judgment of Vossius. He is treating of the Creed called the Apostles’, and is considering the question, whether that creed was really the composition of the twelve apostles: on which subject he expresses himself to this effect. “In those primitive times, the profession of the faith was simple. It was one by which men professed, *that they believed in Jesus Christ; or else, that they believed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.* In the primitive age there was no need for any formulary like this creed. It was after a variety of heresies had broken in upon the Church, that such a formulary began to be required.”<sup>v</sup>

I would guard against the possibility of their being imputed, to the apostolical age, in relation to these two creeds, any inconsistency of variation. In truth, it may well be thought, indeed it can hardly be thought otherwise; that the second of these forms was comprehended in the first. For Philip, in his discourse with the Ethiopian, unfolded to him the true doctrine, relating to the Person and

<sup>t</sup> Exp. of the Creed, p. 55. ed. c. 4.

1797.

<sup>v</sup> Vossius de 3 Symb. Diss. 1.

<sup>u</sup> Second Mystagogic Catechism, c. 14. See also c. 29.



dispensation of our Saviour. "He opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture which the Eunuch had been reading, and preached unto him Jesus."<sup>x</sup> And can it be imagined that, before he baptized the Ethiopian, he would fail, while holding such discourse, to instruct him in the institution of baptism, the form of it, and the qualification for it? If this be not admitted; it may well be supposed, that his profession embraced a mental adhesion to all that Philip had now taught, and in particular, to what he had taught respecting the faith of baptism. Thus, while we have on the one hand, the narrative of Holy Writ; and on the other the judgment of learned men, who concur with each other: I think we may rest satisfied, that the latter involves no discrepancy from the former: it may well be possible, that while the creed of the Ethiopian was expressed in the form recorded, he did, at the same time, and by virtue of that creed itself, declare his belief in the Holy Trinity.

It will here be seasonable, that I should introduce from Epiphanius, a remark which I postponed.<sup>y</sup> I have put forth the baptismal profession, as having possibly been subject to this variation: namely, that in some instances, it was enunciated thus; "I believe in God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" and in other instances thus; "I believe in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Now if I mistake not the unanimous judgment of all the orthodox fathers of the early Church: it will appear, that the second of these forms was esteemed fully and perfectly equivalent to the first. For it is thus that the case

<sup>x</sup> Acts viii. 35.

<sup>y</sup> Page 31.



stands in Epiphanius. He supposes the Macedonians to aim at exculpating themselves from the guilt of heresy, by reasoning thus: "We profess the Nicene Creed, and that creed does nowhere declare the Godhead of the Holy Spirit." To this allegation the reply of Epiphanius is to this effect: "Nay, but by this very creed you are confuted. For when it is said in the creed, 'I believe in the Father,' or 'I believe in the Son,' or 'I believe in the Holy Spirit;' it is not a general and irrespective belief, understood in the largest sense of the word, which it is thus intended to express: but a belief which has a confined relation to God: all other belief is, in this case, out of the question. Therefore the Church, in thus speaking of the Son and the Holy Spirit, declares the Godhead of them both."<sup>z</sup>

To these two creeds I would now affix a strong mark of distinction from all others. I contend then, that they are the only creeds, ever known to the Church, which contemplate nothing further than the positive profession of Christian truth; all other creeds containing, additionally, matter introduced, not for the affirming of truth, but for the renouncing of falsehood. These two creeds serve to separate the Christian from the infidel: the later creeds are formed also, to separate the catholic from the heretic. Respecting the first of the two, I have shewn that it involves in its purport the whole body of Christian doctrine; and the same will be equally manifest respecting the second: for to believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, would declare and involve a full belief of all that they have revealed. And therefore I would

<sup>z</sup> Epiph. Haer. 74. c. 14.



observe, that these creeds, as differing from all others, are to be regarded as declaring the *whole* faith, not as affirming any *Articles* of Faith: since we consider Articles of Faith as merely certain *parts* of the whole doctrine, similarly related to it, according to the figurative import of the word, as the limbs are to the whole body.<sup>a</sup> Now in order, when need may arise, to maintain the distinction between these two kinds of creeds; I shall designate them, respectively to the order of time, by the two several names of Primitive Creeds and Enlarged Creeds.

How the enlarged creed came to supersede the primitive, is a matter which has already indeed been explained: but it will be at once serviceable to the cause which I have taken in hand, and to the introduction of subsequent matter, if for the present I drop my own remarks, and employ the representation of a very great man. “The heretics,” says bishop Bull, “would not suffer the Church long to enjoy this simple confession of the Trinity. For after there had, even in the times of the apostles, arisen the Simonians, Menandrians, Cerinthians, and other heretics of the same stamp, who were very busy in secretly corrupting the sound doctrine

<sup>a</sup> The term is thus explained in the Catechism of the Council of Trent; and I see no reason to object to the definition. *Eas [symboli] sententias, similitudine quadam a patribus nostris frequenter usurpata, articulos appellamus. Ut enim corporis membra articulis distinguuntur; ita etiam in hac fidei confessione, quicquid distincte et separatim*

*ab alio nobis credendum est, recte et apposite articulum dicimus. Catechismi ad Parochus, P. i. c. 1. q. 4. I see nothing to object to in this Romish explication, except that the word *articulos* seems to be derived from *artus*, as signifying a *joint*: I should rather, in the present use of it, deduce it from *artus* as signifying *limbs*.*



concerning God the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit; and [in corrupting, in like manner,] other chief Articles of Christianity: soon after the decease of the apostles, these false apostles began to scatter abroad and disseminate their heresies with greater audacity. Hereupon, the bishops of the Churches to which these heretics were giving disturbance, thought fit to compose a larger Confession of Faith, and henceforth to require it of the persons to be baptized; namely, such a confession as might more clearly expound the true notion of the most holy Trinity; adding also those other Articles of the Christian Faith, which the same heretics did in like manner oppose. Those first heretics arose in the East, and, for the most part, disturbed the Eastern Churches only, as hath been shewn already. Hence we may easily gather, that the enlarged Confession of Faith was composed in the East. That is to say, where the poison was spread, there the antidote was prepared.”<sup>b</sup>

Now these words may properly introduce the ancient Eastern Creed, or Creed of the Church of Jerusalem: for this, according to the foregoing representation, will be peculiarly adapted, to yield that illustration, which we now require, of the ancient practice of the Church. This creed, in its entire form, has already been presented to the reader:<sup>c</sup> but I propose now to examine it in detail, taking a distinct consideration of the separate clauses, and pointing out the several heresies, which, it may reasonably be thought, they are intended to deny. This same method

<sup>b</sup> Jud. Eccl. Cath., cap. vi. §. 18.

<sup>c</sup> Page 57.



I shall also pursue with various portions of other enlarged creeds. And in order to make this exposition more distinct and less verbose; I shall place in parallel columns, first, the catholic verities of the creed, and secondly, the heresies which they proscribe.

But it is first necessary to premise a few more words. The primitive creed, in one of its forms, seems to have been framed thus: "I believe in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Now it is to be observed, that it is this form, which seems to have been the ground-work, on which, in at least some remarkable instances, the enlarged creeds were constructed: and the enlarged creeds were formed, by inserting into the primitive creed, such an enunciation of Articles of Faith, as might from time to time be required for the renunciation of heresies. Thus it is represented by Martene, that when any heresy prevailed, there were propounded to those who were to be baptized, special Articles of Faith in opposition to that heresy: and he gives as an example, the creed which was employed at the baptism of the Emperor Justinian, and which contained a contradiction of Nestorianism.<sup>d</sup> This insertion was made in a four-fold way: that is to say: when the heresy related to the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit; the Article of Faith opposed to that heresy was placed after that part of the creed, in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were severally named; and

<sup>d</sup> De Antiquis Eccl. ritibus, b. i. c. 1. Art. 13, §. 16. ed. 1736.



when it related to any other Doctrine of Christianity, it was placed at the end of all the other three classes of articles. This may be exemplified by dividing into four parts, that formulary in our Communion Service, which is commonly called the Nicene Creed: of these parts, the first speaks of God the Father, affirming our positive belief in him, and our contradiction of the heresies relating to him; the second speaks in like manner of God the Son; and in like manner the third speaks of God the Holy Ghost; then the fourth, which begins after the word "Prophets," embraces in it the contradiction of other heresies, which subvert the faith, but which do not relate to any one of the three persons of the blessed Trinity.

And now, to revert once more to that ancient form of baptismal profession: "I believe in God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Herein is plainly set forth the true faith in the Holy Trinity; that faith embracing a belief of the real Godhead of the Son and the Holy Spirit; to both of whom, as well as to the Father, the name of God is applied: thus excluding the tenet of both Arius and Sabellius. I make the following remark agreeably to bishop Bull. The Doctrine of the Trinity is, in some respect, more clearly expressed in this ancient and simple creed, than it was in the enlarged creeds of the later time. For, by the additions afterwards made, the word God became separated from the names of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; so that the attribute of Godhead might seem to belong only to the Father: and indeed, as Bull remarks, it did seem so, though quite contrary to the mind of them who made the addi-



tions.<sup>e</sup> The Socinians have, I believe, a strong affection for the Apostles' Creed, and it is thus that they construe it: but is it not according to a meaning of their own, instead of the intended meaning of the words, that they embrace this formulary? It will deserve their consideration, whether the *original* form of their creed was any other than this: "I believe in God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost?" and whether the doctrinal argument, which they claim from the *present* form, rests on any other foundation, than the dislocation of a word? a dislocation which circumstances required, but which was never intended to blind their eyes. If they desire a faithful exposition, which echoes down from the apostolical age to this very day, the true meaning of this formulary; they may, as I think, find it in the teaching of the Church of England: which thus declares what is chiefly to be learned from the Apostles' Creed: "First, I learn to believe in God the Father; secondly, in God the Son; thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost."

After these preliminary remarks, I will now proceed to a particular examination of all the several articles contained in the Creed of the Ancient Church of Jerusalem.

I believe in [only] one God,  
the Father  
Almighty,

The Cerdonites and Marcionites  
taught, that there were two Gods.<sup>f</sup>

Certain ancient heretics acknowledged one God as Lord of the soul, and another as Lord of

<sup>e</sup> Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. iv. §. 3.

<sup>f</sup> Ibid. c. vi. §. 16.



the body : neither of whom could, according to this doctrine, be Almighty, or supreme over all things.<sup>g</sup>

Maker of Heaven and Earth,

The Cerinthians and other Gnostics, did not acknowledge God the Father to be the Creator of the world.<sup>h</sup>

And of all things, both visible and invisible:

All the Gnostics attributed the visible and invisible things to different creators, and denied that the visible world was made by the supreme God.<sup>i</sup>

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,

The Cerinthians denied that Jesus Christ was one, separating Jesus from Christ.<sup>k</sup>

The only-begotten Son of God, who was begotten of the Father before all ages, real God,

The Cerinthians, the Carpocratians, and the Ebionites taught, that our Lord Jesus was a mere man, the Son of a man, and that he did not exist before he was born of Mary.<sup>l</sup>

By whom all things were made:

All the Gnostics denied, that God the Father made all things by his Son.<sup>m</sup>

Who was incarnated, and became man, was crucified and buried; and who rose from the dead on the third day,

The Docetæ affirmed, that our Saviour had no real human body, but only the appearance of one: according to this tenet, it would be impossible either that he should

<sup>g</sup> Cyril. Hieros. Cat. viii. c. 3.

<sup>h</sup> Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. 6. §. 16.

<sup>i</sup> Ibid.

<sup>k</sup> Ibid. c. vi. §. 16; c. ii. §. 6; and c. vii. §. 8. In the second of these places, he speaks to this effect; and I refer to this passage, as being peculiarly instructive in more respects than one. "Epiphanius expressly testifies, respecting the Cerinthians, that they taught, that Jesus is not Christ. And Ire-

næus, who is the best interpreter of the Apostle St. John, teaches us, that it was against these Cerinthian heretics, that were directed those words of that apostle: *Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* And again: *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.*"

<sup>l</sup> Ibid. c. vi. §. 16.

<sup>m</sup> Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. vi. §. 16.



And went up into the heavens,  
and sat down on the right hand  
of the Father :

And who is coming to judge  
the living and the dead :

Of whose kingdom there shall  
not be an end.

And [I believe] in the Holy  
Ghost, the Paraclete,

Who spake by the Prophets:

have been born, or crucified, or  
buried, or that he should rise  
from the dead.

Simon Magus, Menander, Ma-  
nes, and perhaps other heresiarchs,  
each gave himself out to be the  
Christ: the contradiction of which  
tenet is involved in this article.<sup>n</sup>

The Gnostics denied both a fu-  
ture judgment and a resurrection  
of the dead.<sup>o</sup>

The Sabellians and Marcionites  
taught, that after all things were  
made subject to the Son, the Son  
would be absorbed into the being  
of the Father. Another form of  
heretical doctrine was, that after  
Christ had put all enemies under  
his feet, he would cease to reign.<sup>p</sup>

Most of the Gnostics taught,  
that the Holy Spirit and the  
Paraclete were different beings.<sup>q</sup>

These words are plainly di-  
rected against the Gnostics, almost  
all of whom taught the existence  
of two Gods: one who is mani-  
fested in the Gospel; the other,  
whom they represented to be the  
Creator of the visible world. They  
taught also, that Moses and the  
Prophets of the Old Covenant,  
were not inspired by the Holy  
Spirit, but by a power emanating  
from the Creator of the visible  
world, and that their writings  
were therefore to be rejected.<sup>r</sup>

<sup>n</sup> Cyr. Hieros. Cat. 4. c. 15.  
and Cat. 15. c. 5. See the note  
of the Benedictine Editor.

<sup>o</sup> Epiph. Haer. 26. c. 15. p. 97.  
Petav. See also page 53 of this  
treatise.

<sup>p</sup> Cyr. Hieros. Cat. 15. c. 30.  
Ambr. de Fide, b. v. c. 13.

<sup>q</sup> Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. vi.  
§. 11.

<sup>r</sup> Ibid.



In [only] one baptism of repentance for the remission of sins :

And in [only] one Catholic Church :

And in the resurrection of the flesh :

And in the life everlasting.

These words are a formal contradiction of a tenet of Marcion, who taught "that there were three baptisms for the remission of sins:" a doctrine broached by him, after being denied the absolution of the Church from an excommunication, which he had incurred by a lewd crime.<sup>s</sup>

Against the heretics, generally, whose meetings were called Churches, but are here, by the term *catholic*, distinguished from the one only Church, to which the doctrine and the promise of salvation is limited.<sup>t</sup>

Most of the Gnostics denied the resurrection of the flesh.<sup>u</sup> The antiquity of this denial appears from the writings of St. Paul.

The Gnostics affirmed, that the greatest part of mankind would be annihilated at the day of judgment.<sup>x</sup>

To this examination of detached parts, I will subjoin the testimony of Bull, as it applies to the whole formulary. "It is now, as I think," says he, "sufficiently clear, that the Jerusalem Creed is ancient, and that it is indeed no other, than the old Oriental Creed, which the apostolical men composed, as an antidote, against the manifold heresy of the Gnostics, which, soon after the

<sup>s</sup> Epiph. Haer. 42. c. 3. Cyr. c. 21.

Hieros. in Procatech. c. 7. See the note of the Benedictine Editor.

<sup>t</sup> Cyr. Hieros. Cat. 18. c. 26. Aug. Lib. de Fide et Symbolo,

<sup>u</sup> Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. vi. §. 15.

<sup>x</sup> Lord King's History of the Apostles' Creed, p. 359. Ed. 1719.



death of the apostles, raised its head with unusual audacity in the eastern parts.”<sup>y</sup> It deserves consideration, whether upon inquiry, it might not probably appear, that there was no heresy whatever, to which the ancient Church at Jerusalem was exposed, and of which a distinct repudiation is not involved in this formulary. To this creed our best attention, in the present investigation, is properly due: Jerusalem being the mother of all the Churches, and the fountain head of ecclesiastical tradition, and therefore a source, from which we are likely to derive most invaluable light, respecting the most ancient, and most salutary, administration of sacred things.

I will now invite attention to certain particulars contained in the three Creeds of the Church of England. I begin with the Apostles’ Creed.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate.<sup>z</sup>

Of the early heretics, there was a partial, perhaps a general, doctrine, something like this: namely, That the Saviour, also called the Spirit of Christ, descended in the form of a dove upon Jesus at his baptism, and was separated from him at

<sup>y</sup> Jud. Eccl. Cath. cap. 6. §. 17.

<sup>z</sup> Bishop Pearson considers the name of Pilate introduced, in order to denote the circumstance of time. But we are to consider, that the phrase *sub Pontio Pilato*, is not conformable to the Latin mode of denoting time. I rather consider

it to mean, *Under the power, or infliction, of Pontius Pilate*. The usual way, as I conceive, of fixing a date, in a Roman document, (such as this creed is,) would have been, by the names of the Consuls, or by that of the Emperor.



*the time of his being taken before Pilate; and that this Saviour, as being inviolable [ακρατητον] and invisible, neither did, nor possibly could suffer.<sup>a</sup>*

The Holy Catholic Church;  
the Communion of Saints.

The first of these articles is against heretics universally, and the second against schismatics universally: both heresy and schism being thus proscribed.

The import of these two articles has already been separately considered. But there is one remark, which I desire to make on their conjunctive position: because it will still further illustrate the character of Articles of Faith. The first of them, against heresy, is much more ancient than the second, which is against schism: and accordingly you will find, that the Church, almost from its beginning, had to struggle against heresy, but that its peace was little, if at all, disturbed by schism, till about the middle of the third century.

The forgiveness of sins.

My opinion is, that this article may have been against the Novatians: who denied the power of the Church with respect to the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism.<sup>b</sup> But I speak doubtfully.

<sup>a</sup> Και τουτο [τουτον; see Grabe's Edn.] μεν απαθη διαμαμενηκεναι (ου γαρ ενεδεχετο παθειν αυτον ακρατητον και αορατον υπαρχοντα.) και δια τουτο ηρθαι προσαγομενου αυτου τω Πιλατω, το εις αυτον κατατεθεν πνευμα Χριστου. Grabe's Irenæus, page 33. See also pages 102 and 233.

<sup>b</sup> Erasmus is of this opinion, and Bull of the contrary. [Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. vi. §. 7.] But

should it even appear, according to Bull, that this article, in other parts of the Catholic Church, existed before: I am still of opinion, that as a part of *this* creed, (that is, the creed of the Church of Rome,) it may have been first introduced on this occasion, and with the meaning here assigned to it. See the Suppl. Rem.



Thus far I have been generally labouring, under the disadvantage, which arises from the want of full and positive testimony. Now it is indeed, under the deficiency of records, impossible to produce, relating to each, or even any, of the foregoing articles, such perfect evidence, as may warrant me in ascribing to it, with certainty, that peculiar aspect, which I suppose it to wear. The amount of evidence, nevertheless, will be felt I think very strong, if you consider; first, that these heresies did exist; secondly, that they were incompatible with Christian communion; thirdly, that they were in effect, thus excluded from it; and fourthly, that during the time anterior to these heresies, we find, in the records of the Church, no vestige of any Articles of Faith, thus enunciated. But henceforth the lamp of history will clear our path. I will now proceed to select some illustrative clauses from the creeds, commonly called the Nicene and the Athanasian. Here my allegations will be established, for the most part, either by positive testimony, or by such force of evidence, as a reasonable mind would hardly resist: should the case, in any particulars, be otherwise, I will frame my statement with a proper regard to the difference between opinion and proof. The following examples are selected from the former of the above-named formularies.

Who came down from heaven.

This clause, with very slight variation of language, was, as a test of doctrine, applied at the second Council of Antioch, to Paul of Samosata: who revived the heresy of Artemas, and spoke of Christ,



Begotten of his Father before all worlds; begotten, not made.

Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.

One Catholic and Apostolic Church.

as a mere man and (κατωθεν) of earthly origin.<sup>c</sup>

Against the Arians: who maintained, that the Son of God was a creature, and made out of nothing.

Against the Macedonians: who denied the Godhead of the Holy Spirit.

The term Catholic has been already considered. With respect to the term apostolical, the true Church is thus limited to that founded by the apostles: this is probably directed against those early Gnostics, who, for the most part, maintained, that themselves only knew the mysteries of God, and that the doctrine of the apostles was generally false and spurious.<sup>d</sup> Of the Carpocratians, as we learn from Epiphanius,<sup>e</sup> some professed to consider themselves wiser than all the apostles, and some even preferred themselves to our Saviour.

My last examples are now to be taken from the formulary, called the Creed of St. Athanasius.

The Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance.

Against the Sabellians, who are said to confound, or mingle, the Persons; and against the Arians and Macedonians, who are said to divide the Substance.

<sup>c</sup> Euseb. Hist. vii. 30. and v. 28. Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. iii. §. 5. The words of the creed are κατελθοντα εκ των ουρανων: those of the Synodical Letter are, Τον μεν γαρ υιον του Θεου ου βουλεται

συνομολογειν εξ ουρανου κατελθηναι.

<sup>d</sup> Bull's Jud. Eccl. Cath. c. vi. §. 14.

<sup>e</sup> Haer. 27. c. 2. p. 103. Petav.



For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal.

The right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world: perfect God, and perfect man,

Subsisting of a reasonable soul and human flesh.

Against the Sabellians, who taught, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, were only one person. This is called *confounding the Persons*.

Against the Arians, who denied the Godhead of the Son; and against the Macedonians, who denied the Godhead of the Holy Ghost. This is called *dividing the Substance*.

The Arians were the sole occasion of introducing this kind of expression: which must therefore be interpreted accordingly. Two things were designed by it: one, to obviate the Arian tenet, that the three Persons were differing in kind, and in degree, as being of unequal perfections; the other to obviate the Arian calumny upon the Church, as believing in three Gods.<sup>f</sup>

Against various heretics, who by denying either the entire and complete Godhead of our Saviour, or his entire and complete human nature, impugned the true doctrine of the Incarnation.

Expressly against the Apollinarians: who so far denied our Saviour's humanity, as to maintain, that he had a human body without a rational soul, but that the Word, or Divine Nature, supplied the place of the Soul.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>f</sup> Waterland on the Athan. Creed. To this work the reader, if he requires further explanation

of these words, is referred.

<sup>g</sup> Pearson on the Creed, vol. i. p. 256.



Who although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ.

One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God.

One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For, as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ.

I deem it unnecessary to proceed further with the examination of this formulary. In the way of example, enough has been produced. I should contend, that the whole document, from beginning to end, is entirely of the same character: and in thus saying, I do not feel myself liable to any very powerful resistance of contradiction or dispute. Dr. Waterland, with much probability, supposes it, in its origin, to have been the composition of a bishop, and framed by him soon after his entrance on the episcopate, as a rule for his clergy, and as a means of satisfying his colleagues of his own orthodoxy:<sup>1</sup> and it will hardly be disputed, that such

Against a doctrine, similar to, if not the same as, the heresy of Nestorius: which heresy taught to this effect; that the Eternal Word of God, and the Man Christ Jesus, were two different persons, of whom the former inhabited the latter; and that Jesus Christ was not God, but had his beginning by birth from the blessed Virgin.<sup>h</sup>

Against the Apollinarians: who confounded or mingled the Divine and human natures into one, making the Godhead subject to change.<sup>i</sup>

Against the Apollinarians; declaring that Christ is one, not by mingling two natures or substances, but by uniting them both in one person; as the human soul and human body, though substances quite different, are nevertheless united in one man.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>h</sup> See Mr. Palmer's Treatise on the Church, P. I. c. 14.

<sup>1</sup> Waterland on Athan. Creed.

<sup>k</sup> Ibid.

<sup>i</sup> Ibid. c. 8. Works, vol. 4. p. 265.



compositions, common as they were in these times, would have a sole relation to those heresies, which either existed, or were imputed, or suspected.

It is irrelevant to my present business, to expatiate on the mischievous character of the several heresies, here proscribed; a character, which, by an unlearned reader, will perhaps, in some instances, be little understood. This, however, will be a proper subject for future attention. Meanwhile, that such a reader may be in no degree scandalized, by finding such exactness of scientific language, employed in the statement of that sacred truth, which the scripture has put forth in so much simplicity: I would, for the present, obviate the feeling which may thus arise, by saying; that the Church, which imposes such articles, is not answerable for this. "The perverseness of heretics," says Dr. Waterland in treating this subject, "has made it necessary to guard the faith by strong and expressive words, that cannot easily be eluded."<sup>m</sup> And again: "We are thus forced to distinguish, with the utmost nicety and accuracy, to obviate the cavils and pretences of heretics."<sup>n</sup>

From the same writer, as an appropriate conclusion to my present effort of illustration, I will extract the following statement, relating to the general subject of this treatise. "The whole design," says he, "and end of creeds, is, to preserve the rule of faith, *as contained in the Holy Scriptures, and not in the false glosses and corrupt inventions of men.* And when endeavours are used to poison those

<sup>m</sup> Waterland on the Athanasian Creed, ch. 10. p. 295 of the 4th vol. of his works, ed. 1823.

<sup>n</sup> Ibid. p. 296.



fountains of truth by ill comments and forced constructions; *preservatives* must be thought on to keep the fountain pure, and the faith sound and whole. As to the primitive Churches; their constant way was, to enlarge their creeds in proportion to the growth of heresies; that so, every corruption, arising to the faith of Christ, might have an immediate remedy: without which prudent and wise caution, the faith would have been lost, in a little time, through the wiles and artifices of subtle, intriguing men.”<sup>o</sup>

<sup>o</sup> Waterland on the Athanasian Creed, ch. 11. p. 304 of the 4th vol. of his works, ed. 1823.



## CHAPTER XIII.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE THREE CREEDS OF THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND.

**I**T is now time to consider the question: How far is this intended to apply? Does it apply to all creeds whatever? If not to all, then to what part of them? My answer is this: I do not undertake the defence of any, but such as have been framed on the principles insisted on in this treatise, and I consider all the Creeds of the Church of England to belong that number.

Should the true character of these formularies thus be established: it is hoped, that they will be disengaged from almost all the odium and obloquy, which they have undergone; and that they will appear to have originated entirely, in a strict and positive necessity, of separating the real, from the forged and counterfeited, Christianity. Now a stronger case of *religious* necessity can hardly be imagined. For if our salvation depend on our embracing *a certain doctrine*, and not, on our embracing *any doctrine to which men may give a certain name*: surely we have, on this view, a most serious warning, to be on our guard against the delusion of a name.



It is thus proper, that I should fix, by description, the amount of subject matter, to which my labour of vindication extends. This will require, that I should, first, give a brief account of the Creeds of the Church of England. And this may justly be considered the more necessary, from the circumstance; that all these creeds, though the fact has not arisen from fraud or design, are known under names, which convey a false impression relating to their authors.

First then; we will speak of that, which is known by the name of the Apostles' Creed. This creed is no other, than that of the ancient Church of Rome. The origin of its present name may be thus explained. Among the episcopal cities of the ancient Church, there were some, in which Christianity had been planted or established, in connexion with the personal residence and administration, of one or more of the first apostles. The churches thus formed were, from this fact, designated as Apostolical Churches. In eastern countries there were several, such as Jerusalem, Corinth, Antioch, and Ephesus: but in the western, there was only one, namely, Rome; which had been subject to the personal administration of the Apostles Peter and Paul. Thus distinguished among the cities of the west, it was called in the way of distinction, *The Apostolical See*: and thus, according to Dr. Wall, their bishop came to be called the *Apostolical Bishop*, and their creed, the *Apostolical Creed*.<sup>p</sup> I

<sup>p</sup> Wall's Hist. of Infant Baptism, Part II. Ch. 9. Vol. 2, p. 430. ed. 1720. See also Water-land's Remarks upon Dr. Clarke's Exposition, in the 5th vol. of his Works, p. 392, ed. 1823.



will beg to add my own opinion, that the term, *Apostolical Creed*, may have been a mere abbreviation of, *The Creed of the Apostolical See*. The name then of the Apostles' Creed is now readily explained. For the term, when expressed in Latin, is equally capable of denoting both the Apostolical Creed, and the Apostles' Creed.

Secondly ; the Creed commonly known among us as the Nicene, is not, as its name may seem to imply, that which was framed at the first Council of Nice ; but is in fact the Creed of the Council of Constantinople, which was held in the year 381, that is, of the Second General Council. The contents of this creed embrace in them the substance of the Nicene Creed, properly so called : to which are added certain additional articles, and specially that contradicting the heresy, which was maintained by the Macedonians, and which denied the Godhead of the Holy Spirit. Such were originally the contents of this creed : to which in later times an augmentation has been made in the words, wherein it is affirmed of the Holy Spirit, that he proceedeth from "the Son : " the original creed having in that part of it, been worded thus : "Who proceedeth from the Father ; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified." This is the present state of that which, with us, is commonly called the Nicene Creed. How this name came to be affixed to it, I am not able to explain : but I think it may have been owing to the very high honour which, during the Arian controversies, had become attached to the Council of Nice, and under the influence of which, the word Nicene may have



been used as a word, of much the same import with the terms Catholic and Orthodox.

Thirdly; with respect to the Creed called Athanasian. This creed is by Dr. Waterland supposed to to have been framed about the year 430, by Hilary bishop of Arles.<sup>q</sup> The same writer considers it probable that Hilary may have made it shortly after his elevation to the episcopal office; to be a rule for his clergy, and a means of satisfying his colleagues of his own orthodoxy.<sup>r</sup> With respect to its name; this I think to be explained with much probability of conjecture, by the same learned divine, as having arisen after the manner already supposed in the case of the Apostles' Creed, from an equivocality of language. "As to the name of Athanasius," says Dr. Waterland, "I take it to have come thus. Upon the revival of the Arian controversy in Gaul, under the influence of the Burgundian kings, it was obvious to call one side Athanasians, and the other side Arians; and so also to name the orthodox faith the Athanasian Faith, as the other Arian. This creed therefore, being a summary of the Orthodox and Catholic Faith, might in process of time acquire the name of the Athanasian Faith." Such indeed is the common flow and derivation of language, that we cannot wonder if *the Creed of the Athanasians* should change its name into *the Athanasian Creed*. "The equivocallness of the *title*," says the same great writer, "gave a handle to those that came after, to understand it of a form of faith *composed* by Athanasius; just as

<sup>q</sup> On the Athan. Creed, ch. 8. p. 268.

<sup>r</sup> Ibid. p. 265.



the equivocal title of Apostolical, given to the Roman Creed, occasioned the mistake about its being made by the apostles.”<sup>s</sup>

Dr. Waterland, to whom I am so much indebted in my account of this creed, has summed up his very acute and judicious investigation of its date and author, as no more than “probable conjecture, in a case which will not admit of full and perfect evidence.”<sup>t</sup> Still however the unquestioned facts of historical record are such, as to place both its production, and its reception, within that limit of time, to which the present vindication is applicable.

It will be proper to add, in conclusion, a few words respecting the names of the three creeds. As to those of “the Apostles” and “the Athanasian:” it was quite necessary to obviate, by explanation, any mistake respecting their true character: but inasmuch as the ambiguity is thus removed, there will be no inconvenience in retaining the use of these names through the sequel of this treatise. But with respect to the Nicene and Constantinopolitan Creeds: as it is important to distinguish between the two; it will be necessary, in our future progress, to designate them by such names as may keep the distinction in view.

<sup>s</sup> On the Athan. Creed, ch. 8. pp. 266, 267.    <sup>t</sup> Ch. 8. p. 268.



## CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE EXTENT OF THE DESIGN AND SUBJECT-MATTER  
COMPREHENDED IN THE PURPOSE OF THIS TREATISE.

**T**HE subject-matter embraced in this vindication is, in general, all Articles of Faith and of Doctrine, which, agreeably to principles already laid down, have been ever imposed; and in particular, the Creeds and Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. Respecting them it will be maintained, that they have been laid down on these principles, and that they are entitled to all the vindication, which these principles afford.

But it will not be understood, respecting this extended range of subjects; that it forms any part of my design, to vindicate and establish all the various propositions contained in these formularies. On the contrary; not one single proposition contained in the whole of them, will be treated of with this view. Many of them will indeed be brought under notice, as examples: and it is hoped, with respect to particulars, that much advantage of defence will thus incidentally arise; and with respect to the collective body of doctrine, that this elucidation, will bring to light a position of strength, which is other-



wise, by popular misapprehension, obscured and concealed from view. In fact, my purpose is to encounter, not the adversary, who impugns any single Article of Faith or Doctrine ; but him who denies, collectively, the validity, authority, and lawfulness, of all such articles whatever ; who maintains, that the whole of them are vicious in principle, and that no such thing ought to be imposed or to exist.

Of such opponents, the main stress of objection lies upon an allegation, that such articles have been imposed, wantonly and without due authority : and the answer is, that the imposition was deemed necessary, and that the authority was competent. Almost the whole force of accusation brought against these formularies, considered *in genere* ; rests upon this allegation, and is overthrown by this answer. Now this defence extends to the whole of the subject-matter above defined : that is, inclusively of the Creeds and the Articles of the Church of England. If a question be raised, as to the correctness of including this latter formulary : I will merely reply, for the present, that the Articles were put forth, “for the avoiding of the diversities of opinions ;” and that it must, be apparent, from the nature of the case, from the phrase employed,<sup>u</sup> and from the view of those articles themselves, that the points of diversity, thus aimed at, were opinions of previous existence, and not any opinions, of which the possible futurity might be contemplated.

<sup>u</sup> See the Suppl. Rem.



I claim it then, as due to the defence of the Reformed Church of England, to maintain: that this church has never, in any instance, or in any degree, wantonly and officiously, or even spontaneously, undertaken to dictate its own decisions; that it knows no rule of faith but Holy Writ; and that it has never, beyond the very phrase itself of Scripture, prescribed any doctrinal definitions, otherwise than for the repelling of contrary doctrines, previously divulged. I would maintain, that there has, in thus repelling, been no desire to multiply the credenda of religion, or to enlarge, or to modify, the truth of revelation, by new discoveries, new deductions, or new statements; and that nothing has been intended, beyond the positive necessity, imposed by Christ himself, of preserving the souls of men from heresy and error.

But it will further be considered, that the three creeds have a strong ground of defence, which is, from the nature of the case, unavailable to the Thirty-nine Articles. It is specially necessary, that this ground should be insisted on. For Articles of Faith are terms of communion: and, if a question should arise respecting their lawfulness, the best resolution of that will be obtained, from considering, whether there was an authority to impose, and whether that authority has been exceeded or abused. As to the first question; it is to be considered, whether the Church of England has received, by due transmission from the apostles, the authority of church government. This is a question, of which all the orthodox members of that Church hold the affirmative; and of which the proof does not fall within



the scope of this treatise. But the second question is, whether the Church, thus authorized, has, or has not, exceeded or abused her authority. Her authority comes from the commission of our Saviour: she is thus empowered to impose lawful terms of communion: has she gone beyond that commission, and imposed unlawful ones? For it is admitted, that her right of obedience emanates from her commission: and it must follow, that if she requires more than she is commissioned to require; at that point her authority, and her rightful claim of submission, are at an end. It will be admitted also, that the Church of England does not claim to be the Universal Church, and thus to plead any security from error; but that it claims only to be a part of that Church. Let it be considered then, that although this Church be only a part of the Catholic or Universal Church; its authority, as to this point, is exactly the same as that of the whole. For the fact is, that with respect to those Articles of Faith, which, as terms of communion, it imposes upon laymen; there is not one, which has not, in its present mode of formal enunciation, been either decreed, or at least sanctioned, by the Universal Church of Christ.

This representation will not be construed into a comparative depreciation of the Thirty-nine Articles. Respecting them, collectedly viewed, it is obvious, from the nature and circumstances of the case, that this high ground of defence cannot be maintained: but this will be no valid ground, why the others should be deprived of it. And it is also to be considered, with respect to a portion of the separate positions contained in these Articles; that even here



also, this defensive plea must not be surrendered. For much of these separate parts, is nothing else, than an echo from the primitive and catholic voice of the undivided Church.



## PART II.

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### ON THE FALSEHOOD AND MISCHIEF OF ERRONEOUS OPINIONS RELATING TO FORMULARIES OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE.



OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

RELATING TO FORMULARIES

OF ERRONEOUS OPINIONS

ON THE FALSEHOOD AND MISCHIEF

PART II.



## CHAPTER I.

A GENERAL CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN CAPITAL AND  
PERNICIOUS ERRORS.

**T**HE obloquy which has existed against Creeds and Articles of Faith, has chiefly been occasioned by gross misunderstanding and misrepresentation. A principal measure of defence will therefore consist, in stating facts, and in thus securing the protection of truth. Let us chiefly advert to two different views of the subject.

On the one hand, it is found, that Articles of Faith are not expressed in the very words of Scripture. Standing in this form, they have been represented, not as essential verities of holy writ, but as mere deductions from such verities; as the deductions of a process, originating in the spontaneous inclination of speculative minds; as dogmas imposed by wanton authority, on no better ground than a mere human opinion of their necessity: and it is supposed, that the formularies, in which they are collected together, were intended to afford a summary of such truths, as were necessary for salvation, or as were most important.



Such a view might naturally provoke reprehension. Shall fallible men, it might be asked, imagine themselves competent to mend an enunciation of truth, which God has imparted? Shall human weakness pretend to discover, and to supply, imperfections in Divine revelation? We may safely admit the force of such objections: our only concern with them is, to deny that they apply to the case. On this view of the formation of creeds, we might well expect, that the same weak judgment which prompted the undertaking, would conduct the process, and that the result would wander far from truth. Of deductions, so obtained, we might well be apprehensive, that they would disfigure the aspect of true religion; defacing those heaven-born lineaments of Christianity, to which God has given a native evidence of truth; and perverting, by a misdirection of principles, the faith, obedience, and happiness of men. We might also anticipate respecting such deductions, that they would divide the judgments of mankind and enflame contention; and we may admit, that a painful and injurious infliction would thus be made on the conscience, which was compelled to embrace, for terms of religious communion, the decrees of a vain and pragmatical excogitation. Such might be the natural consequences of superadding to the amount of revealed truth, the supposed results of inferential discovery. I will not now enlarge on the measure of destructive error and of human misery, which may have actually sprung from this source. At the same time I will not scruple to admit, respecting our own Articles of Faith and Doctrine; that had



they been constructed on such principles, they could not have justified any reasonable anticipation of sober and edifying truth.

But the worst part of the supposed proceeding would be that of *selecting*, whether from the Scriptures, or from human deductions, or from both, a summary of necessary and important doctrines. You *may* determine the relative magnitude of matter and space: for this use, you have your scale of mensuration: but by what scale would you measure the comparative importance of all those truths, which a Christian ought to know and believe? On what principle, for instance, would you pronounce the resurrection of our Lord to be a truth, more important than his atonement? the former of which is, and the latter is not, declared in the Apostles' Creed. In such a work, fancy and fanaticism might do much; but Scripture and reason would afford little countenance and little direction. And can it, I would ask, be any thing short of presumption and blasphemy, to characterize as unnecessary or unimportant, all those principles of Divine truth, which, in such brief compendiums, must unavoidably be omitted? It is true, indeed, that all our *moral obligations* have been summed up in ten precepts, and still more briefly in two: but here we are to remember, that the work of abridgment is that of God, not of man.

But to canvass, on *such* a view of their introduction, the formularies of the Church of England, is little better than to frighten our minds with a



chimera of their own production. There is, however, another view of the subject, which differs from the former, in the same degree, in which reality differs from fiction and history from imagination. For the true state of the case is this: namely, that Articles of Faith, in regard to both their actual introduction and their justifiable use, are to be regarded, as having been brought forward by the struggles of the Church against the aggressions of heresy.

When we understand the character of this adverse principle; we shall be qualified, in some degree, to anticipate the quality of its maxims and instructions: and though it be difficult, or even impossible, for imagination, apart from knowledge, to reach that enormity of wickedness which is here realized; we may at least be prepared to expect, concerning the doctrines of heresy, that they would tend to subvert the faith, to frustrate the purpose of Christianity, and to destroy the possibility of salvation.

We are particularly to regard, in this principle, a strong mark of distinction from open infidelity: namely, that its attacks upon Christianity are made, under the mask of Christianity itself. It does not deny Christ, but arrogates the sanction of that holy name, and, under this pretension, ascribes to a revelation, which has been accredited by God, and acknowledged by men, such pernicious and polluting falsehoods, as would make that revelation of no effect.



It is hardly possible indeed, in the present estimate, to lay too much stress on the *name* of Christianity, as we find it to have been employed by the ancient heretics. This pretension was common to them all: we never apply the name of heretic to any man, who does not apply to himself that of Christian. We may illustrate this by the case of the Mahometans. They acknowledge Christ as a true prophet; and their religion is not, by any means, so remote from Christianity, so repugnant to virtue, and so encouraging to wickedness, as that of the Cerinthians. Why then do we not call them heretics? For this only reason; because they never call themselves Christians. And thus it is that, whatever evils they may have brought upon Christendom, the Church has never been necessitated to guard against them, as against heretics: there never was any attempt to designate the Koran as the Doctrine of Christianity; nor was it ever known, that a Mussulman would seek, by a false appellation of himself, to propagate or to recommend his real faith. There is a certain sect, described by Epiphanius, as having been formerly Pagans, but afterwards professing Christianity: of these, during their earlier state, he represents the peculiarities to have been harmless, inasmuch as he considers those peculiarities to have been incapable of misleading the mind from truth: "for," says he respecting these sectarians, "they were not yet denominated as Christians, but merely as Gentiles."<sup>x</sup> In a word, it was the name of Christians, as we

<sup>x</sup> Epiph. Haer. 80. c. 3. p. 1069. Ed. 1682.



may gather from such examples, and from the nature of the case, which imparted to heresy, that peculiar virulence of evil and magnitude of danger, which the Church was necessitated to repel.

It was this name which rendered the heretic, as an adversary to the Gospel, far more destructive, than either the slanderous accuser, or the bloody persecutor. As to the persecutor indeed: it was his cruelty, which called forth the testimony of martyrs, and thus supplied that strong evidence of truth: such efforts for the extinction of the faith, were gloriously effectual to its propagation. But as to the heretic, the result was very different. For, in the first place, by the usurpation of this name, the simple Christian was beguiled to the destruction of his soul, and plunged into a depth of perdition, more irrecoverable than his former unconverted life. We need not be distrustful of Epiphanius, when he says, that heresy is worse than infidelity:<sup>y</sup> for it is thus, with pointed relation to such persons, that we read the judgment of Holy Writ. "The latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."<sup>z</sup> Now to these, the teachers of heresy, had it not been under the colour of a name, could have gained no approach. It was the name of Christ, which, according to Cyril of Jerusalem, was thus employed

<sup>y</sup> Χειρων γαρ ἡ κακοπιστία τῆς ἀπιστίας. Ancoratus c. 9. p. 13. ed. 1682.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 20.



for the cover and concealment of impious doctrines.<sup>a</sup> It was this name by which, according to Irenæus,<sup>b</sup> the heretics were enabled to work the destruction of souls. It was the name of Christians, which Theodoret speaks of as a mask of antichristian depravity and malice.<sup>c</sup> On the same subject Tertullian declares himself to this effect. "We have been taught that there would come ravening wolves in sheep's clothing. What is the sheep's clothing, but the name of a Christian? And who is the ravening wolf, but the teacher of heresy?"<sup>d</sup> Respecting the founder of the Manicheans, we gather from Epiphanius, that his efforts for the dissemination of his doctrine were encountered by general repugnance and confutation; and that it was not till after the experience of this result, that he bethought himself of the expedient, of giving to that doctrine the name of Christianity.<sup>e</sup> Having heard of Christ and of Christianity, he determined upon deceiving mankind through the instrumentality of this profession.<sup>f</sup> These examples may make us the more alive to the import of those scriptural expressions, in which we read of ungodly men, who crept in *unawares*,<sup>g</sup> and of false teachers, who would

<sup>a</sup> Ὡσπερ μελιτι, τη του Χριστου προσηγορια τα των δυσσεβων δογματων ιοβολα συγκαλυπτοντες. Cat. iv. c. 2.

<sup>b</sup> See page 15 of this treatise.

<sup>c</sup> Haeret. Fab. Lib. I. Praefat.

<sup>d</sup> De Praesc. Haer. c. 4. Routhii Opuscula, tom. 1. p. 125. ed. 1840.

<sup>e</sup> Haer. 66. cc. 4 and 5. pages 621, 622. Ed. 1682.

<sup>f</sup> Ακηκοως δε περι ονοματος Χριστου, και των αυτου δουλων, Χριστιανων τε φημι, διεγνωκει δια του ονοματος της υποθεσεως Χριστου, απατησαι τους πεπλανημενους. Epiphanius, as above, p. 622.

<sup>g</sup> Jude 4.



*privily* bring in deadly heresies :<sup>h</sup> the secret machination consisted in the false appropriation of a character, and the heresy was embraced, because it was propounded under the outward credit and pretension of a holy doctrine. The case of the Manicheans is a striking example. This heresy became in the event most extensively and alarmingly diffused : yet we have seen, how slow was its propagation, till the time when, (according to the common phrase) it became one of the various denominations of Christianity. And now, to speak of the infidel accuser, and his calumnious invectives : it was by the heretics, that such accusers were chiefly enabled to envenom their darts : it was by alleging, as attributes of real Christianity, the lives and the doctrine of men, who thus professed it. It was, as Eusebius represents it, the infamy of their crimes, which spread itself over the whole Christian family.<sup>i</sup> It was thus that there accrued to the Christian name the dreadful imputation, of Thyestean banquets, of murderous orgies, and incestuous pollutions : for crimes like these were matters of real perpetration among heretics. We may derive from Theodoret the following general view. “The name of Christians was given, both to the teachers of horrid impiety, and to the messengers of evangelical truth ; and thus, by those who knew not how to discriminate, the men denoted in common by the same word, were all blended in the same imputation of depravity.”<sup>k</sup> The sect of Carpocrates, in parti-

<sup>h</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 1.

<sup>i</sup> Της ἐξ αὐτῶν φήμης εἰς τὴν τοῦ παντός Χριστιανῶν ἐθνούς διαβολὴν καταχεομένης. Eccl. Hist. iv. 7.

<sup>k</sup> Χριστιανοὶ γὰρ καὶ τῶν μυσαρῶν δογμάτων οἱ διδασκαλοὶ, καὶ τῶν ευαγγελικῶν οἱ κηρυκεῖς, ὠνομαζόντο· καὶ πᾶς ἀγνοῶν τὸ διαφορὸν, πάντας ἐν-



cular, may well exemplify the case. Wherever, as we learn from Epiphanius, these men were found; the pagans, in those countries, would shun all intercourse of traffic<sup>k</sup> with the Christians, and would not even listen to their words: the Christian Church itself being thus, by reason of sectarian wickedness, regarded with horror and consternation<sup>l</sup> among the unconverted gentiles. It is the judgment of this writer, that it was the purpose of these miscreants, to bring upon the Gospel, by means of an usurped denomination, the defamation and abhorrence of the unconverted world.<sup>m</sup> Respecting the sect of Marcion, which had an extensive prevalence, the circumstances of its origin are truly deserving of remark. It appears, that this heresiarch, had been excommunicated for a flagitious crime; that he sought a release from this judgment; that he experienced either a denial, or a delay, of restoration to the pale; and that he then betook himself to the formation of his heresy, after denouncing, "that he would disunite the Church and bring upon it an everlasting schism."<sup>n</sup>

On the whole, we may fitly take occasion, from the foregoing representation, to remark the exact and descriptive force of the words of St. Peter; when he prophesies, that there would be, among the primitive Christians, false teachers; that these men would privily bring in deadly heresies; that

αγεις υπελαμβανε τους της μιας προσ-  
ηγοριας μετεχοντας. Theod. Haeret.  
Fab. Lib. II. Praefat.

<sup>k</sup> Ληψοδοσια is the word which I  
have rendered by the word *traffic*.

<sup>l</sup> The phrase of the original, as  
applied to the Gentiles, is, ΕΠΤΥΡ-

ΜΕΝΟΙ απο την των αθεμιτων ανοσιουρ-  
γιας. Epiph. Haer. 27. c. 3. p.  
104. Ed. 1682.

<sup>m</sup> Epiphanius, *ibid*.

<sup>n</sup> Epiph. Haer. 42. cc. 1, 2. p.  
302. Ed. 1682.



many would follow their lascivious ways ; and that, by reason of them, the way of truth would be evil spoken of.<sup>o</sup>

Lastly, it is to be noted among the characters of heresy, that it cut away a leading evidence of the Christian Faith. For that faith was introduced by miracles, and to us the miracles are attested by the sufferings of martyrs. But of this attestation Christianity was deprived by a doctrine, common, and I think almost universal, among heretics ; which taught, that it was lawful to conform to the Pagan idolatry, and to abjure Christianity in time of persecution.

Now, it was as necessary for the Catholic Church to separate itself from these sectarians, as it was from the Pagan world : otherwise that Church must have come to an end ; nor could it, even in the event of prolonged duration, have been available for the welfare of mankind. How could Christianity reform the world, while the name of it was employed, as in some cases, to licentiate every kind of wickedness ; or, as in others, to make, of such wickedness, a matter of necessity, as a means of perfection and an avenue to celestial joy ? How could it attract converts, while, under the garb of it, there was perpetrated every unholy crime, which could provoke the abhorrence of nature ? As to its glorious pretensions and its heavenly origin ; how, without the martyr's voice, could these be placed in their due light of evidence and authority ? for martyrdom was one, among the means appointed by God, for the establishment of our faith. If, then, it was necessary



to separate those, who, otherwise, were viewed indiscriminately under one aspect: how was this to be effected? It was obviously required, that there should be provided a real distinction of doctrine, as a remedy to the confusion of a promiscuous name: it was not otherwise possible to baffle those tendencies of evil, which would have rendered Christianity useless and hateful to mankind. For this end, Articles of Faith were the defensive measures of the Church. They were introduced by the earliest apostles, and enjoined by Christ himself. They were introduced, not as the result of human speculation, but as forms of necessity, and enjoined by God.

Of the rise of this necessity, Scripture itself may afford a clear illustration. It appears that, in the early infancy of the Church, the multitude of believers were of one heart and of one soul. Hitherto we have reason to believe, that no heresy had appeared, and that no *Article* of Faith had been prescribed. At this time a general profession would be sufficient, as a bond of union among Christians, and a line of distinction from others. But after heresy had been broached; it then became necessary to require, in the profession of a Christian, the notice of specified *doctrines*. Thus, the denial of our Lord's incarnation, was one of the earliest tenets of heresy: and accordingly, the acknowledgment of this doctrine is made by St. John, an Article of Faith, the want of which was to disqualify from Christian intercourse. "Many deceivers," says the apostle, "are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.



This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”<sup>o</sup> Afterwards occur the words, in which I understand him to speak to this effect: If there come any unto you and bring not this *doctrine* [of Jesus having come in the flesh], receive him not into your house, and give him not your salutation.<sup>p</sup> That is to say, such a person was to be avoided, as one excommunicated, whose discourse was full of danger and defilement: for I deem it a great mistake, if these words be so alleged, as to authorize a neglect of kind offices even to the worst of men.<sup>q</sup> It is thus seen that, before the appearance of heresy, the Christian profession was declared in general terms, and unconnected with any specific doctrines; but that afterwards, it became necessary, in fixing the conditions of communion, to insist upon particular doctrines, and to require, as need might occur, the security of an Article of Faith. The same remark may perhaps apply to the following passage of St. Paul: “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart *that God hath raised him from the dead*; thou shalt be saved”<sup>r</sup> Here is a general profession of faith: but it is also combined with one, and only one, *Article* of Faith, namely, the resurrection of our Lord: an article, which seems to strike at the same heresy of the Docetæ, which is proscribed in the text, above cited, from St. John.

Towards a right contemplation of this subject, it is highly desirable, that we should view, with most

<sup>o</sup> 2 John 7.

<sup>p</sup> Ibid. verse 10.

<sup>q</sup> See the Suppl. Rem.

<sup>r</sup> Rom. x. 9.



attentive regard, that moral portraiture of heresy, which is afforded by Holy Writ and by ecclesiastical history. It is thus that we may form a judgment of the doctrines, which were likely to flow from this source. What folly and what wickedness are there so great, which might not have been stirred into utterance by such impulses? And what, with this view before you, of human depravity, would you say of Articles of Faith? Is it fit that they should be regarded as harsh and tyrannical impositions, proscribing with severity well-intentioned mistakes, errors of weakness, harmless differences of judgment, and honest men who cannot help their opinions? Was it likely, in regard to errors thus arising, that the mind must get bewildered in the labyrinth of its own reasonings, before it could decide upon their falsehood? Was it to be permitted, that these impulses should work unrestrained, not only to the destruction of men's souls, but also to the total confusion of truth and falsehood in the ostensible Doctrines of Christianity? Was it possible, without Articles of Faith, that such impulses could have been resisted?

Let us cast our view over the heresies of the first centuries: the contradiction of which was contemplated in various clauses of the creeds we now use. Were they not such as might naturally be engendered by those moral impulses, which we now contemplate? Was there ever any code of Pagan religion more replete with disgusting folly, uncleanness, and impiety? Was it not easy, in the case of every such heresy, to pronounce, that such doctrine was not that of the



Gospel; that it was not consistent with the terms of salvation, which the Church was bound to declare, nor with the terms of communion, which she was bound to prescribe. Was it not as easy to distinguish from genuine Christianity, the system of Valentinus, as it was the Theogony of Hesiod, the doctrine of Zoroaster, or any other system which claimed no connection with Christianity? Was there any danger of error in pronouncing, respecting the tenets of Carpocrates or Basilides, when first they appeared, that they were different from the faith once delivered to the saints? Was there any danger of mistaking for gales of paradise, these sulphureous exhalations? Again: I will refer, as an example, to a well-known Doctrine of Pythagoras: it is called, the Transmigration of Souls. Can you, with a prompt and undoubting judgment, pronounce, that this is not a Doctrine of the Bible? And will this same judgment become difficult and embarrassed, on a supposition, of such doctrine having been taken up by men, who called themselves Christians? But this supposition is matter of fact: for this doctrine really forms a part of the heresies of Marcion and of Manes.<sup>s</sup> And does it, from this mere circumstance of nominal Christianity, assume the form of a mere variation of judgment, on the part of men who could not help their opinions? Nothing else was designed, in the primitive and proper use of Articles of Faith,

<sup>s</sup> Epiph. Haer. 42. c. 4. Haer. Manicheans and by all the Gnostics. See p. 330 of Petavius's edition. A modified form of this doctrine was, according to Epiphanius, entertained by the



than to declare the deadly falsehood, and consequent incompatibility with Church communion, of those errors, for which heresy thus endeavoured to obtain admission among the doctrines of the Church ?

These acts of judgment are far different from those of the philosophical theologian, who, without emergent necessity for such employment, treats the contents of his Bible, as if they were the proper materials for inductive process or syllogistic combination. This defensive negation of falsehood is as much unfavourable to fantastic delusion, as the method of wanton speculation is adapted to engender it: the one is opposed to the other, as the correction is to the evil and the antidote to the poison.

It will be found, I think, that every serious objection against Articles of Faith, derives its whole force from that false and imaginary view, which I have already noticed: and that every such objection is answered by the disclosure of truth.

In applying this to the defence of the Church of England, I would assert, with regard to its creeds; that they do not contain a single Article of Faith, but what has been inserted there, on a just view of the necessity of thereby repelling the invasion of some false doctrine, which would have frustrated and subverted the design of Christianity. With regard to the more extended body of propositions contained in the Thirty-nine Articles; I will at least assert, that they contain not any part, which was not placed among the public decisions of the Church, on a view of the necessity of condemn-



ing and counteracting, as erroneous and dangerous, some false and mischievous principle which *had been previously* maintained and taught. With respect to the whole of these formularies, I would assert, that they contain not a single position, which is the mere offspring of wanton speculation.

With respect to a body of doctrine, framed on the principle, now vindicated as the originating motive of our religious formularies: there is, if I mistake not, strong ground for a reasonable hope, that it would escape the infection of error.

On the supposition already adverted to, of such formularies having sprung from philosophical speculation and curiosity; I readily admit, that we should have good reason to expect in them a large infusion of absurdity and folly.

But it is not thus, if we suppose such a work to have been gradually formed, as occasion might arise, for the condemnation of error; of error glaring and palpable; of error detected by a plain criterion and a sure standard. If it might, for example, without danger of mistake, be pronounced that the heresy of Marcion or Basilides, was contradictory to the Gospel; the same contradiction might, with equal safety, be pronounced in a thousand instances; and a body of doctrine, embracing the condemnation of various successive heresies, would thus arise, far more voluminous than our Articles: while such a proceeding, in *every* step, might be as exempt from danger as it had been in any *one*. Should this necessity occur ever so frequently; in one age from Simon Magus, Hymenæus, and Phi-



letus ; in another, from Arius and Macedonius ; in others, from Manes and Pelagius, from Nestorius and Eutyches : is it not easy, in regard to every such occasion, to say, This is a doctrine plainly contradictory to the recorded Rule of Faith.

Towards shewing the safety of the criterion thus exercised, it is important to consider one great maxim operating in the decisions of the Church ; namely, that novelty yields a strong presumption of falsehood. It is to this effect that Gregory Nazianzen expresses himself respecting the Apollinarians. “How great, how much to be lamented, even with tears, is the absurdity of these men ! They are pretending, at this day, to announce to us, a doctrine which has been concealed ever since the time of Christ. Now, if their faith is of only these thirty years standing, while nearly four hundred years have elapsed since the manifestation of Christ : what must have been the state of all this long intermediate time ? On this view, our Gospel must have been vain, and our faith must have been vain ; our martyrs have suffered in vain, and in vain have our great and glorious bishops governed the Church.”<sup>t</sup> The same argument is drawn out in a more exact form of chronological evidence, by Clement of Alexandria, a much earlier writer. We may thus represent the sum of his reasoning. “It is obvious,” says he, “to shew, that the societies of heretics have been of later institution than the Catholic Church. If we regard the personal teaching of our Lord and his apostles ; we may consider it to have been completed in the ministry of St. Paul and in the reign of Nero :

<sup>t</sup> Epist. 102. Ad Cledonium. Page 96. ed. 1840.



whereas, respecting certain teachers of heresy," he says, "that they began with the time of Adrian, and extended into that of Antoninus Pius. From which state of things," he concludes, "that the heresies, being of later date, must be doctrines of innovation and forgery."<sup>u</sup> It is the tenor of such reasoning to shew, that these forms of doctrine have come, too late to be true. Irenæus, a still more ancient father, insists on the same criterion of truth; he urges us, for the certainty and evidence<sup>x</sup> of faith, to go up to the spring head of the doctrine delivered by the Apostles; with reference to which, he says, as we might express his meaning in the form most familiar to us: "The Valentinians did not exist before Valentinus, who came to Rome about the year 140; nor were there any Marcionites before Marcion, who sprung up about the year 160." Surely there is a strong inherent force in this argument: If the faith, in all its fulness and in its perfect form, were delivered by the apostles, every thing subsequent and additional must have been false. And is not this inculcated even by an apostle himself? For it is thus that St. John speaks: and he speaks, as it seems, with a special reference to the heretics who denied the Incarnation of our Lord: "This is the commandment, That, *as ye have heard from the beginning*, ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."<sup>y</sup> And in another place, he

<sup>u</sup> Κεκαινοτομησθαι παραχαραχθεις liquidum est. Lib. iii. c. 4. ed. Clem. Alex. Strom. Grabe.  
vii. 17.

<sup>y</sup> 2 John, 6, 7.

<sup>x</sup> Sumere quod certum et re



speaks thus: "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." And here also he speaks with reference to the heretics of his day: for he adds soon after: "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you."<sup>z</sup> It must be at once seen, what a powerful safeguard to truth is thus provided: its value and efficacy must be the greater, from being so intelligible to men of common understanding. From the novelty of a doctrine it may readily appear, that that doctrine is no part of Christianity. "In Christianity," says bishop Pearson, "there can be no concerning truth, which is not ancient; and whatsoever is truly new, is certainly false."<sup>a</sup> And accordingly, it is deeply interesting and satisfactory to observe, in the annals of the early Church, this particular: how frequent, I could almost say, how uniform, on every great occasion of newly emergent heresy, the voice of the Church has been raised against that heresy as matter of *innovation*: the force of the objection seeming to consist in this, that the doctrine which is *new* must therefore be *false*. These complaints of novelty will be found, if I mistake not, to a great extent, to have been coincident with the occasions, which drew forth the several clauses and declarations of our present creeds.

On the same just view, relating to the *origin* of

<sup>z</sup> 1 John ii. 24, 26.

<sup>a</sup> Exposition of the Creed. Epistle Dedicatory.



creeds, we may readily silence another objection : namely, the classing among essential verities of the faith, certain propositions, which are highly metaphysical, and therefore remote from common apprehension. But what if this be the case ? If there be a fault in metaphysical tenets ; the fault is not in the Church, but in those who necessitated the employment of them. The present is not a case, which admits a choice of expressions. The contradiction of heretical propositions must conform itself to the language of those propositions ; it must adapt itself to the terms of them, and to the meaning of those terms : otherwise, it is no valid contradiction. Nor will it appear upon examination, that the condemnation of such tenets, is an unnecessary office : if such tenets are metaphysical, it does not therefore follow, that they are harmless. They may be utterly subversive of the essential faith of Christianity : as such, they will be the fit and necessary subjects of ecclesiastical condemnation. The heresies, relating to the incarnation, which are formally denied and condemned in the Athanasian Creed, may serve for the illustration of this subject. These heresies were, for the most part, of a metaphysical cast : yet each of them attacked Christianity in a vital point.

We may thus, in short, confidently repel every objection against Articles of Faith, which may rest upon the allegation, *that they are not necessary*. We have seen the nature of heresy, as a principal antagonist to the Church ; we have seen the character of its doctrines, and the subversion,



which they carry with them, to the true faith, and to the salvation of mankind. Against the machinations of such a principle, it was imperatively needful to provide defence: and the nature of the case admitted no other, than Creeds, Articles of Faith, and well defined Terms of Communion. This was necessary, not only for repelling destruction from individual souls, but also for the very existence of the Church. We cannot imagine, that the Gospel could have been available to the holiness and salvation of men, if the blasphemous dogmas of Simon Magus, of Marcion, and Cerinthus, had been received as its genuine doctrines: we cannot imagine that Christianity, thus deformed and vilified, could have stood forth among mankind supported by the unconquerable evidence of truth; or that the Catholic Church, (far from enlarging its borders so as to become the joy of the whole earth,) could even have maintained its being, if, without any power of separating its true from its adulterate members, it had embraced within its pale a lewd confederacy of primitive Gnostics. On this footing, its body of doctrine must have been a mass of confusion, in which, neither the Christian could discriminate what he was bound to believe, nor the Pagan what he was called upon to embrace. In vain would you appeal to the Church: for without an Article of Faith, you could not distinguish between the churchman and the heretic. In vain also would you appeal to the Scriptures: for of some Scriptures the canonical authority was denied; many apocryphal writings pretended to that authority; and the proof of authenticity depended on the



testimony of the Church: while, on this footing, there could neither be any canon to determine the question, nor any definite and recognised Church to pronounce a decision. The Christian would have been unrestrained from mingling in the worship of the idolater: and the Christian community, been separated by no distinction, must have melted insensibly into the general mass of mankind, and thus have disappeared from the world.

We know that God has promised perpetuity to his Church: but it is not easy for us to imagine, how that perpetuity could be maintained, if his Church had received from Him no power, to separate her own doctrines from those of falsehood, blasphemy, and lasciviousness. Even the heresy of the Nicolaitans, had it not been repelled by the anathema of the Church, would, by allowing an intercommunity of Christian and of Pagan worship, and by combining, with the promise of eternal life, a free indulgence of the carnal appetite; have been a virtual abolition of the Gospel: at least, it would have left to the Son of God, no other honour than that, of being numbered as one among the false deities of paganism. And if there be in the awful reservation of time, a future day, when the Church of Christ shall be reduced to the utmost desolation, which is compatible with prolonged existence, and when faith shall hardly be found on the earth: a natural prelude and preliminary to that day will have been provided, in realizing the project, of abolishing our Creeds and Articles of Doctrine.



Let us then be alive to the true bearing of a question, which involves, as this does, the very life and being of our Christian Faith. Let us be guarded against all disguises, and artifices, and ridicule, which may obscure its real magnitude. Let us firmly maintain the authority of the Church, and firmly hold fast the form of sound words. These are the proper and rightful means of protection to a religion, which, in matters of conscience toward God, forbids all coercive violence and injury; which enjoins peace and love toward all men, and tender commiseration for all who wander from the truth. Articles of Faith and Doctrine are the indispensable defences of the Church: and then only may she throw them down, when the enemy shall desist from his aggressions. She may cast off solicitude for her children's path, when the adversary shall cease to infest that path, with the stumbling blocks of iniquity and the snares of perdition. But that day is not permitted to the militant state of the Church here on earth.



## CHAPTER II.

A FURTHER ENLARGEMENT ON THE DANGER CONNECTED WITH SUCH VIEWS, AND ON THE MISCHIEF WHICH HAS REALLY ACCRUED FROM THEM.

**T**HE errors which we have noticed, being widely entertained: it will be no unprofitable exercise of attention, if we pause to meditate further on their influence. This may be considered with regard, either to the general question relating to doctrinal formularies; or to any single principle of Christianity, which may therein be propounded.

With respect to the general question, and to the objections advanced against all Articles of Faith whatever, as being in their essential character unlawful and improper: it might be safely conceded, that these objections would be strong, if they were founded upon truth. But if it shall appear, that they stand on no other foundation than error, delusion, and fancy; they ought at once to vanish into air: and it is hoped that the mind, when thus disengaged from its mistakes, may be prepared to recognise, in these formularies, a claim of submission to an ordinance of God and to the rightful authority of his Church. For it is only to an erroneous view,



that the principle of resistance can reasonably ally itself. Is it said respecting these articles, that they are the fruits of a vain excogitation? It has been argued, that the matter of fact is quite contrary to this notion, and that they are not the offspring, but the adversaries, of such a process. Are they spoken of as systems of human invention? Or would it not rather appear, that they have sprung from a repugnance to such systems, and from the resolute determination of holy and orthodox pastors, that they would not suffer the vain inventions of men to pass current for the truth of God. Are they wanton? and are they tyrannical? It is maintained, that they are not wanton, but that they sprung from necessity; and that they are not tyrannical, but that they were dictated by a faithful devotion to the will of God, and to the welfare of the flock which he had purchased with his own blood. To inveigh against them, to allege against them these and similar objections; is commonly esteemed, as a certain proof of liberality: and the desire to abrogate them, would be regarded, as a genuine symptom of intellectual progress. Pity it is, that our liberality should be set to work by our ignorance, and that our intellectual march should be so rapid, as not to allow time for remembering, that while we are ever active and keep moving, it is nevertheless possible, that our movement may be either retrograde or crooked.

Passing on from the general question, let us go into particulars. We have already noticed an ancient maxim; that "the meaning of words must be gathered from the motives of employing them."<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup> Page 85 of this treatise.



Language must be understood with relation to the subject to which it is applied. These principles of interpretation will apply very extensively, to all that passes in the common intercourse of mankind ; and they hold good, in an eminent degree, with respect to formularies of faith and doctrine. The terms of such documents, are not to be construed on the largest view of their meaning : they have no meaning, other than that of reference and application to those errors, which the Church intended to condemn : the Church, in its affirmative judgments, intends nothing more, than to affirm the contrary of some doctrine, which it considers to be false and destructive : as to abstract truth, having an universal bearing, unrestricted by circumstances, and irrespective of occasions ; nothing of this kind was ever inserted in her Articles of Faith and terms of communion ; these articles have no signification, but what is *relative* : they have no signification whatever, but that which history explains : they never would have existed, if necessity had not called them into being. You are taught, for example, that the Son of God is of one substance with the Father : the Church requires you to believe this : yet nearly three hundred years had passed over, before she demanded this confession of any of her children : she never would have required it to this day, had not necessity arisen for so doing : she required it, because of the frightful blasphemies against our blessed Saviour, which had been promulgated and widely disseminated, under the form of saying, that the Son is not of the same substance with the Father : she requires it, because



these blasphemies are quite contrary to the doctrine by which, according to the will of God, you can be saved: she requires it, because she will not incur the guilt of unfaithfulness to God and of destroying your soul: when she requires it, her simple purpose is, to require you to deny the tenets of Arius. And what were these tenets? The recital of them is inexpressibly shocking: but it is impossible, without the allegation of such cases, to make the present subject duly understood. They were such as these:—"That the Son of God was created out of nothing; that there was a time, when he did not exist; that, by reason of the freedom of his will, he is equally capable of virtue and vice; that as the Son of God, he stands related to the eternal Father, only in a way, of which all human beings are capable; that the apostles Peter and Paul, if their obedience had been equally steadfast, might have been raised to the same filial relation to God; that the Word was created only as an instrument for the creation of man; and (dreadful to utter or to imagine!) that he was, by nature, as much capable of lapsing from holiness into sin, as the fallen angels had been."<sup>c</sup> It is with reference to such doctrine, the Church teaches you in the Creed, that it is only by the Christian faith you are to be saved; that this doctrine of Arius is *not* the Christian faith, and that you cannot, by God's covenant, be saved in the belief of it.

The same holds good in regard to all the sentences contained in the Creeds of the Church. On

<sup>c</sup> Socrat. Hist. Eccl. i. 6 and 9. Theodoret. Hist. Eccl. i. 4.



this view, there appears nothing more than a just authority, a faithful administration, a rightful care for the souls of men, a necessary adaptation of measures to exigencies ; a salutary exercise of a power, which is essential to the authority of the Church, and indispensable to the functions of the pastor and to the salvation of the people. But only view the other supposition ; that supposition which, though false, so widely prevails : and then, how much is the teaching of the Church embarrassed ! Consider, for example, the doctrine of the blessed Trinity ; and reflect how much, in a case of misapprehension relating to this high and awful subject, our statements might, on the latter supposition, seem to be entangled with perplexities, which do not really belong to them. We are told in one of our Creeds, “That we must worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance : that in this Trinity, none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another ; that the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.” “This creed,” an objector might say, “is confessedly a human composition : it is not taken from the Canon of Scripture. Then why impose it on the conscience ? why make it necessary to salvation ? Is it intended to mend the declarations of God, which he himself has revealed in his word ? Is it not plain, that these are not the words of Scripture, but mere deductions from it ? Why employ your time in framing these definitions and distinctions of your own ? If they had been necessary, the Word of God would itself have given them.



Why draw up summaries and statements of the faith, which are different from the very statements of the oracles of God. Is there not in this a vain confidence of human wisdom? As to the whole of this formulary: is it not a theory of speculation, a system built by human reason on the alleged foundation of Scripture? Would not such a process, conducted by fallible men, be liable to error? Is it not tyrannical, to impose such a profession? May not other men, in the best use of their fallible wisdom, have come to different conclusions? Does not Scripture contain all things needful to salvation? Then why super-add to it? Is it not illiberal thus to forget, that you are fallible as well as other men? that the judgments of other men are as likely to be right as your own? and that even when erroneous, if they be honest, they can be no bar to God's mercy? Besides: how can I understand what you mean? I read nothing in Scripture about confounding persons and dividing substance: the name of Trinity is not even once mentioned there." Much more might be added to the same effect.

Now all this would be very strong, if it embraced a just representation: failing however in truth, it falls to the ground, and sinks by its own weight. For what if it shall appear, respecting them who originated these definitions of the faith; that the contrary of all this is the true state of the case? that they were actuated by all that hatred, which this objector would express, against every kind of pragmatism and uncalled for intermeddling with the terms of salvation? that they felt, as strongly as he



does, that those terms have been unchangeably fixed by God? that they were animated by all his own zeal and his own impatience, against the adding of human inventions to the body of Divine truth? and that it was in the exercise of these very feelings, that they put forth these Articles of Faith? All this, it is conceived, is fully substantiated, either by irresistible proof, where evidence is to be had, or else, where testimony is silent, by the strongest force of reasonable presumption. Much reason has this objector, on his own view, to complain of the difficulty, of finding the meaning of certain terms, which these articles involve: it is very possible that, on *such* a view, some of these terms may have no meaning whatever. For their true meaning is that only, which arises out of the occasion to which they apply, and which the objector does not consider.

It is this false view of facts, which supplies all the ground, of the clamour against creeds: and it may well give us reason to be humbled at the ignorance of the present age. There was a time, when the forged decretals of Isidorus, and the writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, enjoyed the full credit and currency of authentic documents, and thus furnished an undisputed basis for the doctrine and government of the Church: in like manner, the original of the Pope's temporal dominion, was considered to rest on an undeniable basis, in the fabulous donation of Constantine. These are considered as dark ages. What then can we think of our own, and of the opinion now prevailing respecting the creeds of the Church of England? when it is thought, that they issued from



nothing else than wanton speculation, and that the imposition of them was occasioned by the mere pleasure of domineering over the consciences and understandings of mankind? The errors which I have noticed, respecting the dark ages, are not to be viewed as harmless mistakes, and fit only for the compassion of wiser men: they were errors, which engendered a dreadful amount of calamity to the world. The retrospect of those times may well warn us of the mischiefs, which ignorance may produce. As to that blind credulity, which embraced for truth these notorious impostures; I consider it quite as respectable, as the error, with which I am now concerned: and this latter error, tending as it does to shake the foundations of Christianity, is, in its nature, fully adapted to produce, in proportion to its influence, the same extent of evil, which formerly accrued from the reception of the falsified muniments of the Church.

The brief issue of the matter is this. Christ gave to the pastors of his Church a commission to settle, as to faith and practice, the terms of salvation. Was this commission merely nugatory? If it was not, Articles of Faith were an essential part of it. He that believed not, was to be condemned. What then, in order to escape this condemnation, was he to believe? Would it suffice, that he should believe the doctrine of Mahomet, or of Pythagoras, or what he pleased? And how, without Articles of Faith, will you discriminate between the right and the wrong doctrine? between that which qualifies for salvation, and that which does not? When you rail against Articles of Faith as being the im-



positions of fallible men ; your objection comes in effect to this : that fallible men are not fit to be entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation : for without the power of employing them, that ministry is impracticable. And will you now demand, that this is to be done only in the words of Scripture ? Remember then, that the contradiction of error is the thing required : that this contradiction must be positive and express : and that no book, however large, could provide all those forms of categorical contradiction which might thus be required. For the range of error is boundless. Either therefore the error must be allowed to prevail ; or we must be contented, in repressing it, to speak the *sense* of Scripture, and to employ such terms as the occasion may require.

I would conclude this chapter with strongly protesting against the danger and the mischief of that false representation, in the exposure of which I have now been employed. I would press upon every one, who values the salvation of human souls, to abandon such false and hollow ground. How many, under the influence of such mistakes, may have turned their back upon that Church, out of which is no promise of salvation, and upon that doctrine, to which only has been made the offer of eternal life ! Alas ! I fear the number has been great ; and that, under the influence of such a cause, it must ever increase. I fear that many a dissenter has thus thrown off the bond of submission to the Church, and that many an Unitarian has thus been carried away by a torrent of ignorant prejudice : while a just comprehension of the sub-



ject, would have taught them to regard the Church, as using only her indispensable and inviolable office, and fulfilling her sacred obligations of fidelity to God and charity to the souls of men.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE SAME SUBJECT PURSUED.

**W**ITH a view to further illustration ; I will proceed to exemplify my subject under a twofold regard, to the error which I desire to refute, and to the truth which I labour to establish. It will thus be seen, how very different are the characters of the same enunciated words, according to the light in which they stand : that is to say, whether we regard them as parts of a system spontaneously formed, or as words of an import purely defensive. On this latter view it will be obvious, how necessary it is to fix our attention on those points, which have been already insisted upon as the keys of interpretation : such, for instance, as the design of the imposer, and the tenet which it is proposed to contradict. My examples will be wholly derived from the Thirty-nine Articles. I will add, that I conceive it, for more than one reason, desirable, that I should argue, partly at least, upon suppositions, rather than upon allegations : and suppositions, be it noted, are quite sufficient for the purpose of explanation.

My first example shall be derived from the



Twelfth Article. It is a doctrine of our Church, respecting good works, that they “are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit.” Now if these words were considered, as words merely didactical: it might be thought, that it was the intention of them, to lower the estimate of good works. Why, it might be said, does not this brief instruction set forth the strict necessity of them in order to salvation? If our blessed Lord has promised, for the reward of good works, a heavenly kingdom, and on the neglect of them has denounced the penalty of everlasting fire: why is our language so soft, where that of Christ is so strong? Are we fearful of encumbering morality with unnecessary support? Or shall we, when we compute the necessity of this support, set up our own judgment against that of infallible perfection? There has been propounded, a mode of explaining the Ten Commandments to this effect: that when it is enjoined, for instance, *Thou shalt not steal*; we are not thus *forbidden* to steal, but it is declared to be a privilege of the elect, that they *will not* steal. Now these words of the Twelfth Article, standing by themselves, might be claimed, as carrying with them this very import.<sup>d</sup> But sup-

<sup>d</sup> In fact, I think that they insisted upon in the Eleventh have frequently been construed to Article, and on which I shall mean nothing more. But this soon have occasion to speak more import is peremptorily excluded particularly. by that notion of faith, which is



pose it shall appear, that the due estimate of good works is quite foreign to the purpose of these words; that the English Reformers are not here fixing the value of good works in the plan of our redemption, but that they are aiming at nothing further, than the condemnation of certain specific tenets, which had recently appeared. The tenets to which I allude are such as these: *that Justification by Faith consists, wholly and exclusively, in a sure confidence that all our sins are forgiven us; that good works have nothing to do with it; and that good works are pernicious to salvation.* Suppose then, accordingly, respecting the language under consideration, that it involves a merely defensive proposition; and that it is levelled against a doctrine, subversive of Christian morals and of salvation: and then remember, that it is the office of the Church, in such formularies, to contradict falsehood and to do nothing more.<sup>e</sup> Surely, if nothing else than contradiction is to be required and understood; the contradiction is in this case, positive and strong: for it is, in effect declared, that the works are inseparable from the faith, and that, if the works do not exist, it is impossible that the faith can. With respect to any thing further: inasmuch as the Church of England has never blotted out the sanctions of Christian duty from the canon of Scripture, but has enforced the constant teaching of them; it was quite uncalled for to frame, in a writing destined for a totally different use, any didactical instructions of her own.

<sup>e</sup> See page 82 of this treatise.



These last remarks will be enforced by those, which are now to follow upon my next example: which I shall take from the Eleventh Article.

But here I have occasion to refer to a certain peculiar notion of faith: and this notion, it may possibly be desirable to some of my readers, that I should explain before I proceed. The character of this faith is such, that a man thereby embraces some one principle of Christianity, and no more: this is considered to be enough: and indeed, it may possibly happen, that his one principle is no part of Christianity at all, but a falsehood and a heresy. Thus, the faith of such a man is, a confidence that all his sins are forgiven; or, a confidence in what he calls the imputed righteousness of Christ; or, a confidence that he himself is predestinated to eternal life: he believes one of these points, and he feels it unnecessary to believe more, and thus considers himself to be justified. Now for the sake of clearness, I will, according to the phrase of the learned and eloquent Bossuet, denote this faith by the name of a *special faith*.

Suppose then it should appear, first, that the Eleventh Article is levelled against this very notion: and secondly, that we are, for the sole purpose of crushing this heresy, taught, that the faith, by which we are to be justified, is *the faith set forth in the Homily of Justification*.<sup>f</sup> Now the faith of the Homily is not a *special* faith, but a *full confidence of the truth of all that God has revealed*; and the notion of it is such, that it cannot, in the possibility of things, be se-

<sup>f</sup> This Homily *treats of* Justification, but it is *named*, "Of the Salvation of all Mankind."



parated from an intense earnestness, and zealous activity, in all the duties of a Christian life.<sup>s</sup> Thus, while the Church asserts, what no Christian, in the right sense of the words, can deny, that we are justified by faith only : it might seem *to be her purpose*, not to *teach* you that truth, but to insist that you do not pervert it : or, to say the very least, while she teaches the doctrine, she carefully guards against the perversion of it. You are to believe this position, only in that sense in which the Homily puts it. "That we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification." Observe (what bishop Bull has already noted) how this is stated in the corresponding article, of those put forth in the year 1552 : for though the present article is more ample than its predecessor, it will hardly be thought to involve, as to the present subject, any retractation of that

<sup>s</sup> "The right and true Christian faith is, *not only* to believe that Holy Scripture and all the foresaid Articles of our Faith, are true ; but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises, to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ : whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments. . . . *How can* a man have this true faith, . . . . when he liveth ungodlily and denieth Christ in his deeds ? Surely, no such ungodly man *can* have this faith and trust in God. For as they know Christ to be the only Saviour of the world ; so they know also, that wicked men

shall not enjoy the kingdom of God. They know, that God hateth unrighteousness ; that he will destroy all those that speak untruly ; that those that have done good works (which cannot be done without a lively faith in Christ) shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil shall come unto the resurrection of judgment. Very well they know also, that to them that be contentious, and to them that will not be obedient unto the truth, but will obey unrighteousness, shall come indignation, wrath, and affliction," &c. The third part of the Homily.



more early form. The whole of that article is framed in these words: "Justification by faith only in Jesus Christ, *in that sense wherein it is set forth in the homily of Justification*, is the most certain and most wholesome doctrine for a Christian man." Observe, I pray you, in conclusion, these remarkable words, taken from the second part of the Homily itself: "This true doctrine must be also truly understood, and most plainly declared,<sup>h</sup> lest carnal men should take unjustly occasion thereby to live carnally."

I will next endeavour to illustrate my subject, by an example taken from the Seventeenth Article. This article is by some contended to be, what is called Calvinistical. It is supposed to teach, that the salvation of every man is determined by an eternal decree, which has no respect to any difference between man and man, and is therefore called irrelative and absolute; and that although, in order to salvation, there must be a real conversion from sin to obedience, yet such conversion is the effect of that decree, not the cause of it, and that the decree itself is entirely arbitrary.

Now although I might have other general grounds for maintaining, that this interpretation is absurd; and although, I might justly consider it a most important step, if I could only, to this effect, ascertain, not what this article does mean, but what it does *not* mean: yet I will hope for more. In order to this, I will beg, if there be an acquiescence in the general principles laid down in a former part

<sup>h</sup> *Plainly declared*, that is, clearly explained.



of this treatise;<sup>i</sup> that this article be examined according to those principles. On this view, it will be considered generally, respecting the words we propose to examine, that they are not spontaneously didactical, but words of contradiction and prohibition. More particularly, we will fix our regard upon these four considerations: First, What was the mind of the imposer? Secondly, What was the doctrine which it was intended to contradict? Thirdly, What was the motive of employing these words? that is, as Hilary expresses it, the *causa dicendi*. Fourthly, What additional evidence does history afford in illustration of this subject? It is only necessary for me to premise further, that I take the article as it stands in the Forty-two Articles of King Edward's reign: in this form it properly belongs to our present consideration.

The first question is: What was the mind of the imposer? Suppose then it shall appear, that the writer of this article was Cranmer; that Cranmer also was, as to all intents and purposes now contemplated, the first imposer; and that the doctrine of the Calvinistic interpretation, was one, which Cranmer regarded as a heresy, and incompatible with salvation.

The second question is: What was the doctrine which it was intended to contradict? What is the antagonist falsehood? Suppose then that this falsehood should be, the tenet involved in the following words: namely, *That the faith of Justification consists in the certainty which a man entertains, that he*

<sup>i</sup> See Part I. Ch. XI.



*himself is predestinated to life.* With a view to the credibility of this supposition, I will submit to the judgment of the reader a quotation from bishop Burnett's History of the Reformation.<sup>k</sup> It is to be understood, that the right reverend historian is here speaking, with reference to certain disputes between the Church of Rome and the Reformers, relating to the nature of faith; to good works; and to the merit of good works. "These things," says he, "had been now much canvassed in disputes: and it was thought by many, that men of ill lives made no good use of some of the expressions of the Reformers, that separated faith from good works, and came to persuade themselves, that if they could but attain to a firm assurance that they should be saved by Christ, all would be well with them. Therefore now, when they went about to state the true notion of faith, Cranmer commanded doctor Redmayn, who was esteemed the most learned and judicious divine of that time, to write a short treatise on these heads; which he did with that solidity and clearness, that it will sufficiently justify any advantageous character that can be given of the author: and, according to the conclusions of that treatise, they laid down the nature of faith thus; 'That it stands in two several senses in Scripture. The one is, the persuasion of the truths, both of natural and revealed religion, wrought in the mind by God's Holy Spirit. And the other is, such a belief as begets a submission to the will of God, and hath hope, love, and obedience to God's commandments joined to it; which was Abraham's faith, and that

<sup>k</sup> Vol. i. page 575, ed. 1829.



which, according to St. Paul, wrought by charity, and was so much commended in the Epistle to the Hebrews. That this was the faith which in baptism is professed, from which Christians are called the *faithful*. And in those Scriptures, where it is said, that we are justified by faith, they declared, we may not think that we be justified by faith, as it is a separate virtue from hope and charity, fear of God, and repentance; but by it is meant faith, neither only, nor alone, but with the foresaid virtues coupled together; containing (as is aforesaid) the obedience to the whole doctrine and religion of Christ. *But for the definition of faith, which some proposed, as if it were a certainty that one was predestinated, they found nothing of it, either in the Scriptures, or the doctors; and thought that could not be known: for though God never failed in his promises to men, yet, such was the frailty of men, that they often failed in their promises to God, and so did forfeit their right to the promises, which are all made upon conditions that depend on us.'*"

To these words I will subjoin, as being auxiliary to the present purpose, the following parallels. They exhibit on one side, a part of the doctrine of the Seventeenth Article; and on the other, extracts, partly abbreviated, from the book here referred to by Burnett.

The Article affirms respecting them, who are by God predestinated to life, that *they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ; that they walk religiously in good works; and that, at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.*

Although we be illuminate and have tasted the heavenly gift, yet may we fall. Wherefore, as St. Paul saith, He that standeth, let him take heed that he fall not. And here, *all phantastical imagination, curious reasoning, and vain trust of predestination, is to*



*be laid apart.* And according to the plain teaching of Scripture in innumerable places, we ought evermore to be in dread of our own frailty, and not to assure ourselves that we be elected, ANY OTHERWISE THAN *by feeling of spiritual motions in our heart, and by the tokens of good and virtuous living,* in following the grace of God, and persevering in the same to the end.<sup>1</sup>

As the godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ, is *full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things,* as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

Truth it is, that in the Sacraments instituted by Christ *we may constantly believe the works of God in them, to our present comfort, and application of his grace and favour, with assurance also, that he will not fail us, if we fall not from him;* wherefore, *so continuing<sup>m</sup> in the state of grace with him, we may believe undoubtedly to be saved.* But forasmuch as our own frailty and naughtiness ought ever to be feared in us; it is therefore expedient for us *to live in continual watch and continual fight* with our enemies, the devil, the flesh, and the world, and *not to presume too much of our perseverance and continuance in the state of grace; which on our behalf is uncertain and unstable.<sup>n</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man: at page 367 [the Article of Justification] of Formularies of Faith put forth during the reign of

Hen. VIII.

<sup>m</sup> *So continuing;* that is, if we so continue.

<sup>n</sup> Necessary Doctrine, &c., as above cited, page 224.



The Article speaks of the counsel of God as *secret to us*; and it adds: We must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally<sup>o</sup> set forth to us in Holy Scripture: and, *in our doings, that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us* in the Word of God.

According to the *plain teaching of Scripture* in innumerable places, we ought evermore to be in dread of our own frailty, and *not to assure ourselves that we be elected any otherwise than by feeling* of spiritual motions in our heart, and by the tokens of good and virtuous living, in following the grace of God and persevering in the same to the end.

Let us now proceed to the third question; namely, What is the *causa dicendi*? This may partly be answered on a view, of what I have above supposed to be the antagonist falsehood: and you will further obtain a probable explanation in the following statement; which I take from bishop Burnett. He is treating of the year 1549; and this runs nigh upon 1551, the year in which the framing these Forty-two Articles was undertaken. He thus expresses himself. "There was," says he, "another sort of people, of whom *all the good men in that age* made great complaints. Some there were called gossellers, or readers of the Gospel, who were a scandal to the doctrine they professed. In many sermons I have oft met with severe expostulations with these, and heavy denunciations of judgments against them: but I do not find any thing objected to them, as to their belief, save only that, *the Doctrine of Predestination having been generally taught by the Reformers, many of this sect began to make*

<sup>o</sup> Generally means to *classes of persons*, as distinguished from *individuals*; that is to say, not to *Paul* or *John*, but to the *faithful and obedient* generally. It is thus explained in the *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*: the authority of which book will be considered at a future opportunity.



*strange inferences from it; reckoning, that since every thing was decreed, and the decrees of God could not be frustrated, therefore men were to leave themselves to be carried by these decrees. This drew some into great impiety of life, and others into desperation.* The Germans soon saw the ill effects of this doctrine.”<sup>p</sup>

The fourth question is this: What further evidence does history afford for the clearing of this point? Of such evidence, some has already been given: still there are two particulars, on which to insist. The first is; the observance of chronological dates, relating to the indications of Cranmer's sentiment. Suppose then, that we view these indications seriatim, and that the result should discover, an unvaried repugnance to the Predestinarian doctrine; till at last we come to a time, nearly simultaneous with the date of this Article, probably later, and that we then find him enumerating this doctrine, in a catalogue of heresies. Secondly, it deserves enquiry,—Whether, from the first publication of this Seventeenth Article, there had not elapsed many years, perhaps half a century, before it ever entered the imagination of man to think, that it was Calvinistical? And how would this be well explained, but by the following supposition? namely, that the meaning of the Article was well and rightly understood, until length of time had brought with it, an oblivion of the facts, which unfold its origin and dictate its true interpretation. To put this matter more clearly:—If the Thirty-nine Articles were

<sup>p</sup> History of the Reformation, vol. ii. page 233. Ed. 1829.



from the first Calvinistical; why was it endeavoured in 1595, either to add or to substitute, Calvinistical Articles? Again: If these Articles *were* Calvinistical in 1562, why go about to *make* them so in 1604? For example, the Sixteenth Article says: "We may depart from grace given," to which Dr. Reynolds, at the Hampton Court Conference, (held in the last named year,) was for adding words to this effect, *but not fully nor finally*. Now I would ask, whether, on a view of the foregoing particulars, it might not appear, that this alteration would have made the Article speak, exactly contrary to what it means?

I will now proceed to examine a part of the words of this Article. I divide this part into two principal clauses. The first clause runs thus:—

I. "*Predestination unto life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret unto us, to deliver from curse and damnation, those whom he hath chosen out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.*"

These words are quoted, chiefly for the elucidation of the clause which is to follow, and on which the Calvinistic interpreters mainly insist. The clause already quoted is a *definition*: and the second clause I consider to involve, as denoted by the word "wherefore," certain *inferences* from that definition. The words of that clause are as follows:—

II. "*Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose, by his Spirit working in due season; they*



*through grace obey the calling, they be justified freely, they are made sons of adoption, they are made like the image of the only begotten Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.*

It seems to me, that there are, in this second clause, three *inferences* relating to the predestinated; and that, in these inferences, three several errors are severally struck at. On this view,

The first inference is; That the predestinated are called according to God's purpose, by his Spirit working in due season.<sup>a</sup>

The second is; That they through grace obey the calling, they are justified freely, they are made sons of adoption.<sup>r</sup>

<sup>a</sup> In this case the inference (as resulting from the *definition* in the first clause) is supposed to be drawn from *the everlasting purpose of God*; and the antagonist error may probably have been that of the Semipelagians: which error, it is supposed that the Lutherans had no disinclination to adopt. This error was, that of all Christian obedience *the beginning was of man*, and the consummation of God. The following passage from Aquinas may perhaps illustrate the subject:—  
“Fuerunt ergo alii, qui dixerunt, quod merita præexistentia in hac vita sunt ratio, et causa effectus prædestinationis. Posuerunt enim Pelagiani, quod initium benefaciendi sit ex nobis, consummatio

autem a Deo. Et sic ex hoc contingit, quod alicui datur prædestinationis effectus, et non alteri, quia unus initium dedit se præperando, et non alius.”—[Quæst. xxiii. Art. 5. in Prima Parte Summæ Theologicæ.]

In contradiction whereof, the Article may be understood to teach to this effect: *that the first movement of fallen man towards eternal life, comes not from his own will, but from the grace of God.*

<sup>r</sup> In this case, the inference is supposed to be drawn, from the previous assertion, of what *God had decreed by his counsel*: and the antagonist doctrine may probably have been the scholastical doctrine (to be explained hereafter) of *Merit of Congruity*.



The third is, that which I have now principally in view. It is; That they are made like the image of the only begotten Jesus Christ, they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

Now the form of this inference I would thus represent: If God has predestinated men to salvation, there must be realized in them this character, namely, conformity to the image of Jesus Christ, a religious life, and good works: for he has predestinated none other than such as these. Again: if God has decreed to bring them *by Christ*, this same character must be realized in them: since none other can, according to his holy word, be brought to salvation. So that the Article does not intend to teach you, that the sanctity of a Christian life results from a decree *in which you are entirely passive*; but that this decree embraces none but those, by whom certain conditions are observed, and that you can have no hope of heaven otherwise, than as you regard, on the one hand, these conditions, and on the other, the state of your own life.

I will now then state distinctly what, I conceive to be the antagonist error, and what the antithetic verity.

With respect to the antagonist error, I consider it, according to my previous supposition, to be something similar to this: *The faith of justification is the confidence which a man entertains, that he himself is predestinated to life.* This is, substantially, the tenet, which I conceive, that the Article was principally designed to contradict, repudiate, and drive away, as a pestilence, from the teaching of



the clergy. I also conceive, that the occasion of the Article being framed, was, the alarm then existing at the licentiousness, which, both in England and Germany, had broken forth as the fruit of Predestinarian doctrine.

As to the antithetic verity, I would explain my view of it in the following paraphrase. *No man, as to predestination, can derive any certainty from the decree of God: for that decree is secret to us:<sup>s</sup> nor can he have any reasonable hope relating to it, otherwise than as he is, by self-examination, conscious of those characters, to which God has annexed his promise; namely, the character of conformity to the image of Christ, and the character of walking religiously in good works. For it is certain, that God has predestinated to life none but those, in whom, during their present state of trial, these characters have been realized.*

It is thus contended, that it is one design of this second clause, *to declare the marks and symptoms of God's election*; and that the clause itself is anti-

<sup>s</sup> It is not pretended, that this Seventeenth Article involves a denial, of the following unquestionable truth relating to Divine Providence: (I put it in the words [of bishop Copleston:] "That to God every thing which happens throughout all time is known in its minutest detail from all eternity, and therefore that the destiny of each individual is foreseen as well as that of whole communities." [Enquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination, page

199. Ed. 1821.] Yet it is to be specially noted, that God's decree is affirmed to be secret to us; and it is therefore contended, that this decree, *as it stands connected with foresight and with individual destiny*, is here put forth, as forming no proper object of moral contemplation, nor any ground of rational hope or discouragement; so that all our hope relating to it, must depend upon the conformity of our lives to the will of God.



thetic to those, who propounded a false rule of justification.<sup>t</sup> To them it speaks to this effect: You can have no hope of heaven, otherwise than as you find in yourselves these characters; for it is only such as these, whom God has predestinated to life. Judging from other parallel instances, I could almost say, that this mode of explaining the subject of predestination, seems to have been familiar with English Reformers. They seem to speak to this effect: "Think not of God's decrees: they are secret to you: but the fruits of grace must be realized in order to the hope of glory: therefore, look to your heart and your life. Are you conformed to the image of Christ? Is your life full of good works? Let your hope of heaven be regulated by these regards, and build not on any false security of being predestinated."

Before I quit the subject, I will advert to a point of common misapprehension. There occurs in this article a phrase, which is, I think, sometimes thought to fix upon it, the *certainty* of a Calvinistic meaning: that phrase consists of the words: "as vessels made to honour." This has very commonly, in later times, been misunderstood: but it would be going much too far to take it for granted, that Cranmer, when he employed a Scriptural illustration, understood it wrong: and yet it is most certain, that he did grossly misunderstand it, if he

<sup>t</sup> The Lambeth Articles, though of later date, may at least, be employed to explain the subject. The sixth of them speaks to this effect, "A man justified by faith, has a full assurance and certainty of the remission of his sins and of his everlasting salvation by Christ."



meant thereby to teach Calvinism. For of these vessels made to honour, the scriptural notion is, *that they are vessels, not of a fixed, but of a changeable destination.* This, to any reader of common understanding, must appear certain, from a reference to the eighteenth Chapter of the prophet Jeremiah: where the use of the term, and the moral of the similitude involved in it, prescribe this interpretation, and forbid, as totally absurd, every other. And whereas, the same similitude is also employed by St. Paul; I beg to refer to the following words: "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he SHALL BE a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."<sup>u</sup> Does this language involve the idea of that, which is eternally and unchangeably fixed? Do you gather from it the idea of an absolute and irrespective decree, or of one that is conditionate?—It was imperatively necessary for me to notice this inveterate prejudice of ignorance: for it would, if unremoved, destroy the whole force of my remarks on this subject. I have only to add, that if the reader should be convinced by the present representation; I hope he will view in it a striking instance, of the necessity of interpreting theological formularies with a due regard to their antithetic force. It is indeed a case, and there are many others, in which the observance or the neglect of this regard, will affix to the same

<sup>u</sup> 2 Tim. li. 20, 21.



form of words, two meanings almost totally contradictory.

I may be thought to have bestowed too much attention upon one example: my answer is, that the error, thus denounced, has been prolific of, and is pregnant with, a world of evil; and that time can hardly be misemployed in the counteraction of it. I am prompted however to proceed further in the same line of illustration. My purpose relates to certain expressions, that may, at first view, as being seemingly too strong, excite repugnance: respecting them I would shew, that a due attention to their antithetic force, may possibly remove the objection. Thus, with respect to the natural sinfulness of man's unregenerated state; our formulary speaks of it, as meriting God's wrath and condemnation:<sup>v</sup> of the works done in that state it speaks, as having the nature of sin.<sup>x</sup> But only look at the antagonist doctrine, and the theological import, fixed by previous use, on the language thus employed. The doctrine thus reprobated, is a doctrine of the Schoolmen, relating to *Merit of Congruity*: by which doctrine it was supposed, respecting the infidel and unregenerated state of man, and the actions springing from it, that they are capable of meriting Divine Grace for the doer, and even, by ulterior consequence, of procuring eternal life, not only for the man himself, but moreover, in the way of superabundance, for other men also. In resistance to such folly, it is highly necessary to lay it down, that

<sup>v</sup> Art IX. I render the words from the Latin Articles, which are more authentic than the English.    <sup>x</sup> Art XIII.



such actions, having no sanctity of origin nor promise of reward, have therefore the nature of sin: for the doer of them can derive no good from God, but such as may issue from his uncovenanted mercy: respecting such a man, our utmost hope must be conformable to what we know, namely, that he is in the bands of a merciful creator, and that the servant, who knew not his Lord's will and did it not, shall be beaten with few stripes; that is, shall be mercifully dealt with. But it is quite contrary to the design of such language to imagine an intention, thereby "to confuse together (as archbishop Laurence expresses it) virtue and vice without distinction, to break down the sacred barriers of morality, and to call evil good, or good evil."<sup>y</sup> If you suppose, that the language itself is scholastical; that it is to be scholastically understood; that the usage of the time, and perhaps the exigency of the case, was such, as to demand a strong contrariety of terms;<sup>z</sup> remembering, after all, that the present

<sup>y</sup> Bampton Lectures, p. 91. Ed. 1838.

<sup>z</sup> The language may possibly have in view a form of doctrine, which runs to this effect:—*that there is no neutral state of moral action between grace and sin.* I am guided by Archbishop Laurence to the following words of Luther: "Ego prorsus nullum habeo medium inter peccatum et gratiam. . . . Sed et ipsum Dom. Doctorem [Eccium], credo idipsum asserere, *quod gratia et peccatum apud Scholasticos immediate opponuntur.*—Lutheri Opera, vol. i. fol. 287. Ed. Witebergæ,

1550. See the Archbishop's Bampton Lectures,—Serm. iv. To say therefore of such works, that they *have the nature of sin*, is to say, that they *are not meritorious*; but this latter phrase was, it is conceived, subject to great objection. See the Supplementary Remarks.

With respect to the phrase of the Article, *peccati rationem habere*, to have the nature of sin; there can be no doubt that it is *scholastical*. I need not acquaint the learned reader, that it is not pure latin: in fact it seems to me to be an Italian barbarism: for



contrariety is no stronger than is warranted by Scripture: these suppositions may obviate the idea of any rude and officious violence thus offered to the moral sense of mankind: an idea which, (though the language be in itself entitled to vindication), might possibly have arisen from the supposition of a spontaneous statement, unprovoked by any assault from without, and unprompted by any necessity of resistance. And again: respecting the moral condition in which such works originate, it is equally necessary that you should understand, that it merits God's wrath and condemnation: by which words is to be understood, that it merits, not merely by its existence, but by the actions which it engenders:<sup>a</sup> for there is no living man in whom it

the Italian word *ragione* has the meaning here represented by *ratio*. Aquinas thus uses the word *ratio*, and it is not improbable that it may thus have been diffused among his scholastical posterity. The whole phrase may be found in the *Prima Secundæ*, Question 109, Article 8, paragraph 6. This remark tends to fix the scholastical quality of the phrase. That English latinists should employ a *foreign* barbarism; may be explained, on the supposition of conformity to an anterior and established usage.

I subjoin, from the same portion of his *Summa Theologica*, the following passages, as being possibly, in some degree, explanatory of the present subject. The first is from the 4th Article of the 21st Question: *Totum, quod homo est, et quod potest, et habet,*

*ordinandum est ad Deum*, et ideo omnis actus hominis, bonus vel malus, *habet rationem meriti vel demeriti apud Deum*, quantum est ex ipsa ratione actus. In the 4th Article of the 110th Question, he says: *Est enim gratia principium meritorii operis, mediantibus virtutibus: sicut essentia animæ est principium operum vitæ, mediantibus potentiis*. And the following is taken from the 5th Article of the 114th Question: *Ante gratiam in statu peccati homo habet impedimentum promerendi gratiam, scilicet ipsum peccatum*.

<sup>a</sup> The word *meretur*, is probably scholastical. Aquinas recognizes the two modes of merit, *mereri actibus*, and *mereri habitibus*.—See the *Summa Theologica*, in the *Prima Secundæ Partis*, Quæst. 55. Artic. 1. The classical use of the word will jus-



does not engender actual sins, such as are admitted to be proper subjects of Divine condemnation. "The flesh," says the Article, "lusteth always contrary to the Spirit:" now lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin.<sup>b</sup> "And therefore," as the Article proceeds, "in every person born into this world, it earns, or incurs, God's wrath and condemnation:" for there is no man that liveth and sinneth not. There is therefore no need to understand this Article, as if it represented an involuntary blemish of nature to be a proper object of Divine wrath and condemnation.

I will here conclude my exemplification. My wish is to convey a true idea of the different estimates, likely to be formed of such formularies, under right and wrong impressions. In general discourse, when we cannot understand the speaker, it is common to put the question: What is he talking about? Till we are satisfied on this point, we do not commonly expect to discover his meaning. I wish that every one would trouble himself to ask, and to answer, this question, before he passes any rash judgment on these formularies. It would only be due to *any* document whatever, that we should at least

tify the same interpretation: as in the phrase, *mereri* stipendia. The English Article says: "It *deserveth* God's wrath." Now respecting this word, *deserve*; I am doubtful whether, in the English of Cranmer's time, it may not have had the same meaning. For I find the word thus explained by

Skinner, in a manner, which conveys a clear notion of an *active* quality, as distinguished from one that is merely *quiescent and habitual*. "*Mereri*, q. d. servitute aliquâ (i. e.) officio aliquo aliquid promereri."

<sup>b</sup> James i. 15.



remain undetermined upon its value, till we are satisfied that we understand it: and it is imperatively due to formularies of this nature, that we should not precipitate a judgment, which will, if generally and practically adopted, be likely to produce results at once awful and incalculable.

The case is similar to this. You have an antidote against poison and death, and your life is not safe without it; yet you throw away your antidote, because it is not suitable for the sustenance of your health. In other words, you have an instrument destined for an intended use, and that use, supremely needful: nevertheless, you discard your instrument, because it does not answer some purpose for which it was never designed.

The reader will, I hope, perceive the connexion of these examples and remarks with the design to which they relate: which is, that of displaying the great amount of delusion and of mischief, which must arise, with respect to such formularies *generally considered*, from putting a wrong construction on their intention and use. I proceed in the next place to consider various specific objections against such formularies.



## CHAPTER IV.

ON THE PLEA OF A FALLIBLE NATURE IN THOSE BY WHOM ARTICLES OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE ARE PRESCRIBED.

WE will now more fully consider the following objection: "These Articles are not propounded in the same words and sentences in which God has revealed his will: now it must be an act of usurpation and spiritual tyranny for men, who are not infallible, to prescribe any other, than such as have thus been communicated."

To this it is answered: It cannot be that God, when he has imposed a duty, should withhold the power, which is inseparable from it. If it be contrary to the Divine Will, that the Manichean or the Gnostic should be an heir of salvation; the pastors of the Church must not declare, that he is so: nor must they repel him from the Church, without ascertaining his disqualification: nor can they ascertain that disqualification without exacting, as need may appear, a denial of the error, which it is their duty to exclude: nor will it often occur, that such error *can* be unequivocally denied in the very diction of Holy Writ. Suppose, for example, that the



error were that, which has already been noticed; "that the resurrection is already past:" this error is plainly incompatible with the state of a member of Christ's Church. Now I do not know how you will construct any form, exactly Scriptural, by which this error can be renounced. Would you propose any one of these following modes of language: "I renounce the error, which teaches that the resurrection is already past:" or "I believe that the resurrection is *not* already past:" or again, "I *look for* the resurrection of the dead?" You will remember, that this is not the language of God's revelation: none of these sentences are to be found in Scripture. But, you may say: There are in Scripture other sentences, which are full to the point. Undoubtedly there are, and you will gain no advantage whatever by the use of them: because the other party admits the truth of these sentences as fully as you do, but denies the meaning which you ascribe to them. It is to this effect that Hilary represents the matter: and the case has never been mended since his time.<sup>c</sup> "There is not a single heretic, who, while preaching his blasphemies, does not falsely pretend, that he is preaching agreeably to Scripture. Such is the pretence of Marcellus, of Photinus, of Sabellius, of Montanus, of Manes, and of Marcion. All speak the words of Scripture, without the meaning. The declarations of Scripture are not substantiated by the mere words thereof, but by the meaning of them."<sup>d</sup>

<sup>c</sup> Ad Constantium, lib. ii. c. 9. Operum pag. 1230. Ed. 1693.

<sup>d</sup> Scripturæ enim non in legendo sunt, sed in intelligendo.



But secondly, with respect to the alleged want of infallibility. If in this objection it is taken for granted, that men are not acting under *that direction*, which is infallible: is not this begging the question? When God has imposed an obligation, such as in this case rests upon the pastors of his flock; it is reasonable to presume, that he will, to all who are faithfully disposed, impart his blessing and his heavenly direction, in a measure sufficient for the exigency of their duty: to think otherwise would be at once unworthy of God, and inconsistent with his promise: yet this blessing and direction may be very different from those special communications, by which men are inspired to foretell future events, and to declare a new religion; which God only can reveal. Whether this ordinary help be adequate to the present case; may readily be determined by a reference to examples. Suppose then the case of a man, desiring the Holy Baptism of the Church, or the Communion of the blessed Eucharist, who, with one of the ancient heretics, maintains, that the God of the Jews was an apostate angel; or who, with another of them, teaches the transmigration of the soul; or who inculcates, with a third, that it is expedient for the future happiness of a Christian, to indulge every possible appetite of the flesh. Is it now difficult to determine, in regard to each such opinion: "This is *not* Christianity." Is it not, on the contrary, an easy and safe judgment? Now this is virtually all that is done in the proper use of Articles of Faith: this is all that, in the use of such Articles, the Catholic Church has ever done: this is all that the



Church of England, since the Church of Rome separated from her,<sup>e</sup> ever did, or does to this day. This is all which, in relation to this subject, has given occasion to such violent outcry and such pompous declamation, against spiritual tyranny, and bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and illiberality, and intolerance, and I know not what. Is it not a pity, that such mighty eloquence should waste its power on a topic of ignorance?

<sup>e</sup> It is thus that the matter of fact is set forth by Chillingworth. He says to the Romanists: "*You cast us out of your communion; and then, with a strange, and contradictory, and ridiculous hypocrisy, complain, that we forsake it: as if a man should thrust his friend out of doors, and then be offended at his departure.*" *Religion of Protestants*, page 16. Ed. 1638. If the *overt act* of separation, apart from all theological dispute, be simply, *as matter of fact*, viewed with reference to the question, Who was the doer of it: I think, that this consideration would clear away from the popish controversy, a vast deal of smoke and dust.



## CHAPTER V.

THAT THE IMPOSITION OF CREEDS AND ARTICLES OF  
DOCTRINE CARRIES WITH IT AN ASSUMPTION OF  
INFALLIBILITY : THIS PLEA IS CONSIDERED.

**I**T has been frequently urged as an objection to all symbolical forms, that there is implied in them an assumption of infallibility : by which I suppose is meant, that there is thus exerted over the consciences of men, a control, which cannot be justified *on any ground short of* infallibility.

It might suffice to answer, that the allegation is not true ; that no infallibility is thus arrogated ; and that no pretension to it is implied. When a bishop, on the ground of misbelief, repels either from Christian communion or from Holy Orders ; he does it on the ground, not that he unerringly knows, but that in his conscience he *believes*, the faith of the individual to disqualify him : Articles of Faith and Doctrine are merely instrumental in this function, which cannot possibly be exercised without them : while the function itself is, as we have seen, inseparable from the pastoral office, and such, that without it, all religion must be thrown into confusion, and Christianity itself come to be extinct.



But here I would avail myself of a distinction, suggested by Chillingworth.<sup>f</sup> Is it quite clear then, that this is a case which does not admit of a *reasonable certainty*? of that degree of certainty, of which all men at times are conscious, and which they do not scruple to assert of themselves. If so, why is certainty to be confounded with infallibility, the consciousness of the one, with the pretension of the other? Again: if the question is, respecting a man's qualification to teach religion: why is this imputation to be peculiarly fixed on a judgment relating to *this* subject, any more than it would be on a similar decision, relating to the qualification for teaching music, or any human science?

It deserves to be considered, whether Articles of Faith, when rightly framed and rightly imposed, are in their own nature such, as to justify this imputation of arrogance. We have seen, that the Church hereby does nothing more, than put a negative upon doctrines which do not belong to her: and is it come to this, that since the first beginning of Christianity, honest men, under the ordinary blessing of God, have never been competent to

<sup>f</sup> "My sense may sometimes possibly deceive me, yet I am certain enough that I see what I see, and feel what I feel. . . . A traveller is not always certain of his way, but often mistaken: and does it therefore follow, that he can have no assurance that Charing-cross is his right way from the Temple to White-hall? *The ground of your error here, is, your not distinguishing between Actual certainty and Absolute infallibility.* Geometricians are not infallible in their own science: yet they are very certain of those things, which they see demonstrated. And carpenters are not infallible, yet certain of the straightness of those things, which agree with their rule and square." — *Religion of Protestants*, Ch. 3. Part I. §. 26.



pronounce, that such an opinion is no part of their own religion? If one man may say, that such a doctrine is not to be found in Aristotle: why may not another say, that it is not in Luke? If one may affirm an opinion to be contradictory to Plato: why may not another pronounce it to be inconsistent with Paul? Mark again, how these various errors came to be proscribed: and say, was it possible, in regard to time and date, either that such opinions could be true, or that reasonable and honest men could doubt that they were false? When Nestorius, for example, propagated his metaphysical blasphemy: was it not easy to see, that this doctrine was never, till of late, known before; that Nestorius had no commission to publish new revelations; and consequently, that his doctrine must be false. In the case of Arius; was it difficult, when his impiety first appeared, for Catholic Christians to pronounce, that it was quite new, and that therefore it could be no part of Christianity? How justly does Hilary apply this argument as an appeal to the common sense of mankind! *Quis non videt?* says he: *Quis non intelligit?* “Who knows not this? Who does not understand it?” He proceeds to this effect. “It is nearly four hundred years since the birth of our Saviour. What then! have there been no Apostles and no Christians all this time? Or was their faith, and their hope of heaven all a delusion, till this mushroom doctrine sprung up?”<sup>g</sup>

It may thus appear, that it was not, in itself, a task of such insuperable difficulty, to separate from the

<sup>g</sup> Ad Constantium, Lib. i. c. 5. Operum pag. 1220. Ed. 1693.



name of Christianity that which did not belong to its reality. And yet, if this be not enough : shall we scruple to admit, and to apply to the present case, that which none will deny ? namely, that there can be no error in that judgment which is guided by God.

What then shall we think of our Saviour's promise, that the gates of hell should not prevail against his Church, and that he would be with it always, even to the end of the world ? Is it consistent with this promise, that he should suffer his whole family of faithful people, to fall into a capital error relating to the terms of salvation ? I speak now respecting those terms of communion, which are found in the Church of England : and of these I will say, that they were terms either prescribed, or sanctioned, by the universal Church, and that any error in them, would have been an error, relating to the essence of the faith and to the conditions of eternal life.

With respect indeed to the whole of the Articles of Doctrine, prescribed by that Church ; Articles, which are not so much terms of communion, as terms of pastoral qualification : they do not, in their formal language at least, claim this high and universal sanction. Still even with regard to them, we are to bear in mind ; that the Church of England has herein faithfully trod in the steps of that universal Church, from which she never separated herself. In propounding them also, she does not wander into untracked and perilous fields for discovery of unexplored truth. She limits herself to the simple function of saying : " This is not Christianity."



As to the Articles thus put forth, they differ from the Creeds in this particular: in the Creed it is implied: "if you believe this, you are not fit for the communion of the Church:" in the Article it is implied additionally: "if you believe this, you are not fit to teach Christianity." We might thus perhaps, declare, in part, the import of the Seventeenth Article: "Pelagianism is not true, and the doctrine of Absolute Predestination is not true: for both of them were introduced in the fifth century, and the time of their introduction is such, that they *could not* be true: if you hold these sentiments, you are not fit to be trusted with the ministry of the Word." In taking such a course, it is not likely the Church of England should err, even if her Articles had been ten times the number. There is little danger of a fall, to those who, without curiosity of deviation, follow a path so easy and so smooth.

The cause of fallacy as to this matter, appears to me to consist in this: that these formularies are regarded, as *additions* to the amount of Scriptural truth and of doctrine necessary for salvation. If this were the case, infallibility would indeed be required. But the purpose of them is quite the contrary. They are intended, not to augment, but to retrench; not to enlarge the primitive substance, but to remove the incrustation.



## CHAPTER VI.

A CONSIDERATION OF THE OBJECTION : THAT ARTICLES OF FAITH UNDERTAKE TO DEFINE HIGH AND MYSTERIOUS SUBJECTS, WHICH LIE BEYOND THE REACH OF HUMAN REASON AND HUMAN LANGUAGE.

**T**HERE has been advanced, against the Catholic and orthodox definitions of the Faith, another objection, of which the effect may be thus stated ; namely, That our creeds undertake to define high and mysterious subjects, which surpass at once the capacity of our intellect and the power of our language. If this allegation were true, it would, as far as it applies, be fatal to the cause : but the fact is, that so far as it relates to any of the creeds of the Church of England, it proceeds upon a total misconception.

Should we suppose it the object of these formularies to explain the nature of God ; we might well condemn the presumption of that effort. For the nature of God is incomprehensible ; and that which cannot be understood, cannot be defined. And therefore, had this been the purpose of those dogmatical positions, relating to the Divine Nature, which are contained in the Nicene and Athanasian



Creeds : it is quite certain, that these creeds would have been indefensible. But it is maintained, respecting these formularies, that not one word of them wears the real character of this design ; and that they were drawn up for nothing else, than the suppression of errors and blasphemies : those errors being incompatible with the revealed terms of salvation, and consequently incompatible with the communion of the Church. It is urged, moreover, on the ground of foregoing evidence, respecting the definitions of the Faith, thus objected to ; that they were provided, only as defences against particular dangers, and *never provided till* the several seasons, when the antagonist dangers had become severally emergent. In thus providing, though it was indeed impossible to define, in the fulness of explication, what God is ; it was easy, for all the purposes of maintaining a pure and uncontaminated doctrine, to define, what he is not : and nothing more has been done. For although the sentences of these creeds are chiefly affirmative, the purpose of them is negative : and the affirmative form is only therefore preferred, because, as I have already maintained,<sup>h</sup> the negative would be a thing of impossible application.

This principle is laid down by the great Athanasius with remarkable clearness and energy, and with all that authority, which belongs to truth, when speaking with inherent power of conviction. I would thus convey the effect of his representation. “ Although, by reason of the weakness

<sup>h</sup> See Part I. Ch. X. of this Treatise.



of our carnal nature,<sup>i</sup> the apprehension of the truth be far remote from us in this our mortal state, as indeed it is; still it is possible, according to the phrase of the Preacher himself, to understand the folly of the wicked, and, after you have detected it, to feel yourself qualified to pronounce, that it is more bitter than death.<sup>k</sup> This is the reason then, why I have written to you: because this [folly] I am able to understand and to detect: and I know that, to every faithful Christian, THE CONDEMNATION OF IMPIETY IS, [IN RELATION TO SUCH MATTERS<sup>l</sup>] A MEASURE OF KNOWLEDGE, SUFFICIENT IN ITSELF FOR THE PURPOSE OF GODLINESS. For although it be impossible to comprehend, what God is; still it is possible to pronounce, what He is not: and [thus] we know, that he is not like a human creature, and that it is not lawful to imagine any quality of created things as belonging to him. Such then is the case also respecting the Son of God: although we are by nature, very far from the power of comprehending [his nature]; nevertheless it is possible, and it is easy, to pronounce upon the falsehood of the things taught by heretics, and to affirm, The Son of God is *not* what they say, neither

<sup>i</sup> Δια την της σαρκος ασθενειαν.

This use of the phrase may serve to explain Rom. vi. 19: where, as Athanasius does in the present instance, the Apostle may be understood to adapt his discourse to the natural weakness and incapacity of the human understanding. "I speak after the manner of men, *because of the infirmity of your flesh.*"

<sup>k</sup> Eccl. vii. 25, 26. Athanasius seems to have had before him some reading or version, dissonant from our authorized translation.

<sup>l</sup> I insert these words, as conveying the mind of the author: it is very plain, that his position is not universal, but relative.



is it lawful to imagine, much less to utter, respecting his Godhead, such things as they teach. On this view, as far as I could, have I for my part written to you: as for you, beloved, *receive these things not as containing a perfect exposition relating to the Godhead of the Word, but as confutations only of the impiety of the men, who fight against Christ*, and as affording to them who are willing [to receive it,] a means [of access] to the godliness of a sound faith in Christ.”<sup>m</sup>

I would entreat, that there should be an attentive regard to the very great weight which belongs to this representation. Who can explain the true intent of Articles of Faith, if this man cannot? Who can be better qualified to speak to the matter of fact, to the real and actuating motive? If you ask historically, For what purpose were these definitions first introduced: who can answer you better than he, who was himself so strenuous and so prominent in the conflicts of the true faith, and in the resistance of heretical machination? Of all the creeds of the Catholic Church, that of Nice is the most memorable: and of this creed Athanasius was not only engaged in the defence, but even present at the first formation. Let it be considered then, that the same vindication applies to every single Article of Faith, contained in all the three Creeds of the Church of England. After the forming of all the definitions contained in these creeds, many ages had elapsed, before it was ever thought of imposing on the faithful, with respect to the

<sup>m</sup> Athan. Opera, Tom. I. pag. 343. Ed. Par. 1698.



profession of their faith, any thing further, than the mere abnegation of blasphemy and falsehood.

A few words may be added, respecting the inadequacy of language. That human discourse, when applied to the Divine Nature, is quite inadequate, cannot be denied: still however, it *must* be maintained, that such application, when duly limited, is not only lawful but necessary. This will appear from reflecting, that such application is made by God himself, and that, in words, given for our use; words, from which we are to learn, and by which we are to teach. When it is said, that God repents, or that he comes down to see the tower of Babel: who, in such expressions, contemplates a real perturbation of the soul, as the attribute of Him, in whom is no imperfection? or an act of self-removal in Him, who is every where present? or a desire of knowledge in Him, who knows all things?<sup>n</sup> But the question is: what are the modes of speech adapted to our minds? It is not from any sublime powers, which may belong, distinctively, to the language of a seraph or an archangel, that *we* must gather our needful supply of Divine knowledge: it must be from language that we understand. I would say it with humility and reverence, but I will say it with confidence, respecting the truth of revelation; that it does not always consist in the mere abstract sense, inherent in words or in combinations of words: for this is set aside in every parable and in every metaphor: but that it consists sometimes, in the truth of those impressions, which it is designed to fix

<sup>n</sup> See Augustine, as referred to beneath.



upon the human soul. Thus, when it speaks of the anger of God; the phrase is not adapted to the glory of God, but to the understanding of man. It is thus I conceive, that Scripture speaks after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of our flesh: and I would urge, conformably to Augustine,<sup>o</sup> that if it did not thus condescend to our level, it would not come home to the wants and feelings of all, for whose welfare it provides. To speak of the Divine Nature in terms of absolute philosophical propriety, is impossible; and the attempt to do it would bring darkness and perplexity over minds, which it is the will of God to instruct and to guide. But it may be urged, that we should not carry this further than Scripture itself does; and that we should not apply to the Divine Nature any terms, which Scripture does not. To which I briefly reply: That all human instruction must be afforded by conveying ideas from one mind to another: that the Church cannot select the ideas which, by the teaching of her adversaries, it may become needful to employ, to implant, or to reject; and that ideas cannot be conveyed without words. It is true for instance, that the words Trinity and Person, are no where in Scripture applied to the nature of God: but it is not therefore lawful, that heresy should wear the counterfeit stamp of Christian truth, because it cannot be condemned without employing the ideas, which these words, in the want of others, are selected to denote. If it be

<sup>o</sup> See his treatise *De Civ. Dei*, lib. xv. c. 25, and lib. xvi. c. 5.



necessary to employ the *idea*, the *word* must be lawful; for it denotes, when thus used, nothing else than that idea, fixed and defined by the occasion of its employment: and if the end be commanded, the means, if they be lawful, are matter not only of permission, but of duty. It must never be forgotten, that words of this kind were never introduced into our formularies, till such employment of them had been necessitated by anterior heresies; that they are now to be understood, only with relation to those heresies; and that those heresies could not, without such employment of words, have been either condemned, or even reasoned against.



## CHAPTER VII.

ON THE OBJECTION, THAT ARTICLES OF FAITH ARE NOT  
DRAWN UP IN SCRIPTURAL TERMS.

**EVERY** age of Christianity leaves behind it a record of endeavours, to adulterate the truth of God with the inventions of men. Now respecting such efforts, it has been already maintained, that they cannot be repelled without Articles of Faith.

There is however, relating to this subject, a certain theory, which speaks to this effect: "You must not do this in the way of consequences or deductions: if you do it at all, it is only to be in the very express words, and literal declarations, of Scripture." I have already had occasion to glance at this theory; and I now propose to examine it more fully.

I must begin with an explanation of the subject: for this, to some of my readers, will probably be desirable. We are to remember then, that all Christian doctrine must be derived from Scripture. Of such doctrine there are two kinds. One consists in the sentences of Scripture, taken exactly as they are read therein; the other, in consequences flowing from those sentences: the former of these may



be called *Scriptural propositions*, and the latter *Scriptural consequences*. For example : if it be said “The dead shall be raised incorruptible :” this is a Scriptural proposition, in which the truth is presented in the very form, given to it in the oracles of God. But if it be said : “All men shall rise again with their bodies :” in this instance we have a Scriptural consequence : for this form of words, though occurring in the Athanasian Creed, is not *contained* in Holy Writ, but embodies a consequence *derived* from it. Not only these two kinds of Scriptural truth, but also their joint authority, are recognised in the following authoritative declaration of the Church of England : “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation : so that whatsoever is not *read therein*, nor may be *proved thereby*, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”<sup>p</sup> Now the right view of the subject is this : that the Scriptural consequence, *if it necessarily flows from* the Scriptural proposition, has equal authority with it : and this view is contradicted by the theory, which I have above described. The reader ought to be aware of the glaring contrariety of the right view, and of the wrong. It may be understood by a reference to the foregoing example. Here are two positions : first, *the dead shall be raised incorruptible* ; secondly, *all men shall rise again with their bodies* : of these two positions, there are, among those who call themselves Christians, some,

<sup>p</sup> Art. VI.



who admit the former, but deny the latter. After thus illustrating the theory in question, we will proceed to a consideration of its merits.

We are to reflect then, again, what has been the lot of Christianity : that it has, in the succession of time, been assailed, by a great variety of heresies, most horridly blasphemous, and destructive of human souls ; and that such heresies have been set forth by men, professing to acknowledge the same Scriptures with the Catholic Church, and professing also to vindicate their error, not by suppressing true Scriptures, nor by alleging false ones, but by insisting on a various interpretation of those received in common by both parties.

Let me here suppose a case. A man believes, that the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ are nothing else, than the mortification and regeneration of every believer. Now you may press this man with Scriptural proofs, that our Saviour, actually, and in the strict sense of the words, was crucified, and rose again from the dead ; and he will tell you, with respect to your citations, that he believes them as fully as you do, but that he differs from you respecting the meaning of them. The case I now describe is that of a well known denomination of Christians.<sup>a</sup> The case of the Arian will supply me with another illustration. Are we then to assert the eternal and uncreated Godhead of our Saviour, and to vindicate the Church from those horrid blasphemies, by which this truth was denied ?

<sup>a</sup> See Waterland's Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity asserted, Chap. 5, p. 152, of vol. 5. of his Works. Ed. 1823.



You cannot do this without a deduction: you cannot do it without employing, in that deduction, the word *substance* or *essence*: such term, though not thus employed in Scripture, having been, by the previous use of it on the side of the adverse party, and by the conventional meaning of it, rendered quite indispensable to an unequivocal statement.<sup>r</sup> Thus, in fact, it was the desire of the Nicene Council, to have employed, for proscribing the tenets of Arius, a formulary purely and exclusively Scriptural: but the effort was found to be impossible:<sup>s</sup> and the truth of this judgment was practically evinced. For when, after a lapse of years, the Emperor Constantine afforded an audience to Arius, and interrogated him, whether he held the faith of the Catholic Church: the heretic swore that he was orthodox, and presented a written creed, in which the venom of his doctrine was disguised under the phrase of Scripture.<sup>t</sup> We may well then admit the cogency of the following representation.

<sup>r</sup> See Waterland as above, chap. 2, p. 54.

<sup>s</sup> Athanasius de Decretis Synodi Nicænæ, cc. 19 and 20, in Operum Tom. I. pag. 224. Ed. 1698. Idem in Epistola ad Afros, cc. 5 and 6. Ibid. pag. 895. Ambrosius de Fide, Lib. iii. c. 15. n. 125. In the first of the passages here referred to, the language of Athanasius is very remarkable: for, after stating the first intention of the council to proceed by the allegation of words confessedly Scriptural; and after relating the equivocations by which, on the

part of the Arians, these Scriptural allegations were baffled; he informs us, that they were necessitated to deduce their *meaning* from the Scriptures, (συναγαγειν εκ των γραφων την ΔΙΑΝΟΙΑΝ) and thus to speak out more plainly and to say, that “the Son is of the same substance with the Father.”

<sup>t</sup> Athanasii Opera, Tom. I. p. 340, 341. In epist. de Morte Arii. Κρυψας μεν εφ’ οἷς εξεβληθη της εκκλησιας παρα Αλεξανδρου του επισκοπου, υποκρινομενος δε τας απο των γραφων λεξεις.



I give the substance of it from Vincentius Lirinensis. "You may enquire: If the Canon of Scripture be inherently perfect, sufficient, and more than sufficient: why refer to the exposition of the Church? The reason is: because Scripture is variously understood, and every heretic gives it a meaning of his own. It is therefore highly needful, in the midst of such great and manifold deviations from the truth, that the line of interpretation should be drawn according to the rule of the Catholic Church."<sup>u</sup>

The question then is one of *interpretation*: and really, it is worse than childish to demand, that an interpretation should be given in no other words, than the very words which themselves require to be interpreted: the thing is impossible and absurd. There must in such cases be an employment of terms, which, in the acceptation of both parties, are clear of all disputed and ambiguous meaning. Again: definitions of the faith are *occasioned* by heresy, and employed for *contradiction* of heresy:<sup>v</sup> now every contradiction must adapt itself to the terms of the proposition, against which it is directed: otherwise, it is no valid and effectual contradiction: Doctrines may be advanced, which are quite incompatible with salvation: they may be advanced by those, who, in regard to the text of Scripture, agree with the Church: these doctrines, you may be sure, are not advanced in the very diction of Holy Writ: of doctrines thus advanced, it must be impossible to

<sup>u</sup> Vincent. Lir. Commonitorium, c. 2.

<sup>v</sup> Per temeritatem humanam usurpantur ad contradictionem.

Hilar. ad Constantium Aug. Lib. ii. c. 7. The words relate seemingly to the Creed of the Council of Nice.



provide, from sentences of Holy Writ, any forms of adequate contradiction.

It will appear then, that no false principle of this kind can be separated from the communion of the Church, without employing the form of *a conclusion deduced from Scripture*: yes, none whatever, though it be full of the utmost imaginable blasphemy and wickedness: none whatever, although to endure it as a principle consistent with Church communion, and with the promise of salvation, may involve, in the exercise of pastoral power, the very worst of all perfidy towards God and the most malignant deceitfulness towards man, even the guilt of deceiving men to the destruction of their souls. The very *phrase of Scripture* itself will never suffice, inasmuch as, so far as that is concerned, there is an entire agreement between both parties. Thus, Arius would readily assent to all that you produce from Scripture: though, together with that assent, he would combine such impious blasphemies, as would make our ears to tingle. It cannot be thought, that this evinces a defectiveness of Scripture: I should be sorry, if it raised a doubt in any man respecting the sufficiency of Divine Revelation. To think that Scripture should, *by explicit assertion*, have provided for every possible contingency, so that every speculative error, in every form of enunciation, should therein find an exact, precise, and literal contradiction; would be to require a book of immense and indefinite magnitude. For who can limit the possible varieties of falsehood and error? Who can compute or define that, which is in its own nature uncertain and unlimitable? It must be a book



moreover admitting only one certain, irresistible, and indisputable interpretation: framed in a language, such as no human language ever was or can be, which admits no equivocal sense, nor is capable of having one fixed upon it.

And is it to be said, that no doctrine, however antichristian, is to be declared incompatible with the communion of the Church, if there cannot be found some express contradiction of it in the very phrase of Scripture? Has our Lord given to his Church a power of binding and loosing? and shall it be said, that the mere assumed name of Christian shall place a man within the pale of salvation, though he believe and profess a doctrine, which goes to the extent of even denying the reality of his Saviour's mission, and to the effect of annulling the whole intent of his Saviour's religion? If such tenets are to be proscribed, it can be done only by conclusions or consequences: as for the very sentences of Scripture, it is at once seen, that they are in their own nature inapplicable to the case. The Church cannot *condemn* a false proposition without *employing the terms* of it: in framing a contradictory creed, its choice of words must, of necessity, be guided by a regard to the terms of the heterodox proposition: and the case supposed is, that the terms, thus employed by the Church, are such that, either in themselves, or in their collocation and dependence, they cannot be those of Scripture.

"That the resurrection is past already," is a tenet, respecting which, I presume, it will hardly be questioned, that St. Paul judged it unfit for



Christian communion.<sup>x</sup> If the Church, at this day, maintain the judgment of St. Paul: how is it to proceed? It cannot demand a denial of this heretical doctrine, otherwise than as an inference or deduction from Scripture. To say, that "the resurrection is not past already," is not to quote a text of Scripture, but to urge a Scripture *consequence*: for this form of words does not occur in Scripture. To speak of the actual proceeding of the Church, in demanding of those who come to baptism, whether they believe "in the resurrection of the flesh:" this also is virtually urging a Scripture *consequence*, for this form of words, *the resurrection of the flesh*, is not to be found in Scripture. I would again earnestly press the consideration of this case. It is of a *future* resurrection, that St. Paul speaks to this effect: that if you take away that doctrine, the Christian religion itself is nothing else than a fable, and the testimony of the apostles no better than imposture. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; yea, and we are found false witnesses of God."<sup>y</sup> Shall it then be said, that that

<sup>x</sup> Compare 2 Tim. ii. 18. with 1 Tim. i. 20.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 13-15. See Waterland, as above, at Chap. 3, and pages 62, 63, of the 5th vol. of his works. It seems that the heretical doctrine, against which the apostle here argues, embraced an opinion, *that the resurrection of the body was in itself absolutely and essentially impossible*; so that

no consideration, even of the Divine power, could render it credible. If this opinion were true, it would obviously follow, first, *that the alleged resurrection of Christ was false*; secondly, *that those who asserted that resurrection were false witnesses*; and consequently, in the third place, *that the Christian religion was entirely fabulous*. The existence



tenet shall not disqualify for the communion of the Church, which, in fact, overthrows the faith of the Church? Now there are modern heretics, who deny the resurrection of the body, but who receive the same canon of Scripture that we do. And can it be supposed, that the Church has no power to condemn, and to separate from its pale, this error, unless it be, by a nugatory allegation of Scriptural sentences, the truth of which is assented to by the adversary, while the sense of them is denied? Yet such error cannot be condemned without the medium of a deduction: no form of Scriptural words can be adequate to the case: and the form of words, actually employed for that purpose, must be one, which, if it carry with it the force and obligation of truth, must establish that force and obligation, not upon any express declaration of Scripture, but upon a rational deduction from Scripture.

It is hardly necessary to urge any thing further for the satisfaction of those, who may demand, that the validity of Scriptural consequences should be defended on general principles. Remarks thus offered can hardly be necessary for a reasonable mind: though they may be useful in exhibiting the argument in a more perfect form, by shewing, that it is not merely the exigences of religion, but also the

of this opinion is perhaps recognised in those words of the same Apostle: (Acts xxvi. 8.) "Why should it be thought a thing *incredible* with you, that God should raise the dead?" Indeed, it seems to me, that both the

idiom of the original permits, and St. Paul's argument requires, that the former part of the above citation be thus rendered: "If a resurrection of the dead be not [possible], then neither is Christ risen."



necessity of abstract truth, which dictates the result of the foregoing considerations. I will say then, that to deny the general validity of consequences flowing from admitted truths, whether Scriptural or not, is in itself absurd. For every true consequence is contained in the previous truth out of which it flows, just as a part is contained in the whole : every such consequence must therefore, in its due extent, carry with it the same authority with that previous truth itself. To deny this, must involve a departure from the principles of common sense, and a negation of those primary maxims of undemonstrable truth, without which no argument can have a basis to rest upon, or a position of commencement.

I will conclude by briefly summing up the case between the Catholic Church, on the one side, and some, on the other, who have become separated from its communion. To the latter I would say : “ You complain of our unscriptural formularies : but you, as well as we, have your distinctive definitions of doctrine. Now such definitions, on your part as well as on ours, are unscriptural. In the nature of things they must be so : they could not otherwise, be distinctive : for if, without gloss, exposition, or variation of statement, you will confine your doctrinal positions to the formal terms of Scripture ; there can be no strife between you and us. But herein lies the difference : such definitions, on your part, were spontaneous : on ours they were defensive : our definitions were formed for the sole purpose of denying yours. Are we then to admit, as terms of our communion, whatever dogmas you choose to pronounce ? This, I



presume, will not be demanded. We must therefore have a liberty to reject. And how shall this liberty be employed? How can we, in terms purely Scriptural, reject positions which are unscriptural? you forced us upon what we have done: and now, you accuse us of doing, what you have both done yourselves and compelled us to do.”<sup>z</sup>

<sup>z</sup> See Athanasius De Decretis Syn. Nic. c. 21. and Epistola ad Afros, c. 6. at pages 226 f, 227 a, 896 a, of Tom. I. Ed. 1698.



## CHAPTER VIII.

A CONSIDERATION OF THE OBJECTION; THAT CREEDS ARE ILLIBERAL AND UNCHARITABLE, AND THAT HUMAN AUTHORITY IS NOT COMPETENT THUS TO NARROW THE OFFER OF SALVATION WHICH GOD HAS MADE.

WITH regard to various particular creeds, which may, in several instances, have been imposed: there can be no difficulty in admitting their unlawful character. But when objections are made, not against this or that creed, but against all, and against the essential nature of such formularies: it may safely be pronounced, that every such objection proceeds upon a fundamental error of misconception relating to the subject.

Thus, the charge of illiberality is quite irrelevant: the case admits not of being either liberal, or the contrary. The virtue of liberality, whether the word be understood to relate to donations of bounty, or to any other practical exercise of our sentiments; always implies a discretionary power, whether it be of doing, of giving, or of thinking, more or less favourable to other men: it is not the appropriate virtue of those, who are tied down by



their instructions. The lord may be liberal, but the steward must be faithful. Now in dispensing the rights of communion, the office of the Church is plainly that of a stewardship: she has no authority to bind or to loose otherwise, than according to the will of God: this is the prescribed duty of Christian pastors, and it is not for man either to enlarge or to narrow this province. There is here no discretionary power: and therefore, the imputation of either liberality, or the contrary, must be, at least, unmeaning and absurd. But if the pastors of the Church be acting faithfully, in putting forth and applying the determinations of God: it is plain, that a reproach thus offered, must also be pregnant with blasphemy against the Diviue attributes. If on the other hand, whether in restraining or relaxing the terms of salvation, there be a transgression of the declared will of God: then it is plain, that a most sacrilegious crime is committed: liberality, as well as every other virtue, is here out of the question: the guilt incurred is enormously great, but the fault is not, in either case, that of being illiberal.

With respect to the charge of uncharitableness: if we limit ourselves to the true design of Articles of Faith: (and it is that only that we profess to defend:) it will obviously appear, that the want of charity must lie on the other side, and that it would discover itself rather in the neglect, than in the employment of them. Where would be the charity, when enquired of by a traveller in the dark, of telling him, that he is safe and in in the right road; when you well know, that if he persists in that road, he



will soon lose his life? Is it denied, that there are errors of religion which are quite inconsistent with a Christian hope of salvation? Is there charity, in suffering a man to destroy his soul, rather than reveal to him his danger? When the Church, by her creeds, excludes from communion the error, which is inconsistent with salvation, she puts forth her power, not for destruction, but for edification; that the misbeliever, being duly warned, may reject the poison which is preying on his life, and that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Another objection against creeds may be thus expressed: That it is not competent for human authority thus to narrow the offer of salvation, which God has made. But the true question at issue in relation to this matter, is: Whether it is competent for human authority to *enlarge* that offer? For this unauthorized enlargement must take place, if the sacraments of the Church, which are the pledges of eternal life, are to be dispensed to the maintainers of those errors and blasphemies, which the word of God has declared to be *incompatible with* eternal life. It is plain that such authority, of offering salvation to those, to whom God will deny it; is merely a human authority, by whomever exercised. That a minister of the Church should thus propound the terms of salvation; is to go beyond his commission, and therefore beyond his power. Then again on the other side, when you contemplate this power in its just and lawful exercise; is there not a fallacy, in assuming it to be a human authority, merely because it is administered by men? Is not the authority that of him who commission-



ates, not of him who bears the commission? And is it proper to designate as merely human, that authority which has been thus constituted: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you?"

## CHAPTER IX



## CHAPTER IX.

A CONSIDERATION OF THE OBJECTION, THAT ARTICLES OF FAITH ARE SET FORTH IN FIXED AND PRESCRIBED FORMULARIES.

**BUT** still it is objected, that these articles are set forth in fixed and prescribed formularies. Now, with respect to their being prescribed; I do not see how this can be otherwise than essential to the case: for if they are not prescribed, they cannot be Articles of Faith, nor can they be resorted to for the test and evidence of religious belief. As to the circumstance of their being fixed, that is, previously drawn up with a view, not merely to individual, but to general uniformity; this may be entitled to a little, and only to a very little, more consideration.

To claim that there should be a multitude, and a great diversity, in the ways of doing that, which may adequately be done in one: is to discover, as I think, that aberration of judgment, respecting primary truths, which must preclude the possibility of benefit from disputation: since it is plain, that no reasoning can proceed on a total disagreement respecting first and fundamental maxims. Why should not one form, resulting from comprehensive and deliberate



examination of all varieties of cases; be better, than an endless number, springing from sudden exigence, from extemporaneous judgment, and from variable, and oftentimes, inaccurate decision? Why should every individual pastor be more competent for the true and proper enunciation of the faith, than a large synod of bishops? Or rather: why should such individual judgment be preferred to the united judgment of the whole Catholic Church? For, be it well understood, that it is no less than this universal and concurrent authority of the universal Church, which we claim, for the sanction of every Article, which the Church of England imposes upon its communicants.

But the strong consideration lies still behind. If the formularies of the Church are fixed, and in the same words imposed upon all: we are to bear in mind the possibility, that only one form of words may be adequate to the case. Thus, there is a specific error, which calls for a specific contradiction: one form is dictated by the circumstances of the case: and that enunciation must be chosen, which is best suited to the purpose in view. The tenet of the heretic is framed in a certain definite expression: and there must, in the declaratory judgment of the Church, be an expression equally definite. The case admits not of latitude or variation. The contradiction of falsehood must always employ, or at least be adapted to, the very terms of the falsehood which it contradicts.



## CHAPTER X.

A CONSIDERATION OF THAT OBJECTION, WHICH ASCRIBES  
TO A PART OF OUR CREEDS A SCHOLASTIC ORIGIN  
AND CHARACTER.

**T**HERE are perhaps other objections, which may seem to claim attention, on the ground of the countenance they derive from celebrated names. But these do not appear to demand, at least for the present, any specific reply. The reason is, that they rest upon the basis of one or more of those false suppositions, which it has been my previous endeavour to overthrow: so that, if the confutation of those suppositions be valid, the objections, built upon them, will be found to stand upon no real foundation. Thus, if it be supposed, that our creeds were meant for abridgments of doctrine, or for spontaneous enunciations of truth; and if it be shewn, that they were not so: it is needless to bestow consideration on censures, which take for granted, that they were. But there is one objection, which I strongly desire to bring under notice: because the due examination of it will be found peculiarly instructive; and the objection itself, though disgracefully weak, is such, as it is highly



desirable to *understand*. The objection is that, which alleges against a part, at least, of the doctrine contained in our creeds, that it is *Scholastical*: and the purport of this objection is, as I suppose, to propagate an opinion, that the doctrine of the Trinity was invented by the Schoolmen.

Now it may both illustrate the present subject, and be otherwise useful; if, before I proceed, I bring into view certain various forms of religious doctrine, in order to classify them, and to provide a suitable distinction of names.

Of these, the first are *Scriptural propositions*: by which I mean, those sacred truths which are propounded in the unaltered phrase of Holy Writ.

The second form I would describe as consisting of certain tenets, which, though previously not known as parts of Christianity, or, at least, not so known from the beginning, have nevertheless been put forth as such, in the form of inferential deduction; taking their first rise and introduction at a time, more or less remote from the age of the apostles. The tradition of the Church knew nothing of these tenets, either as sentences of Holy Writ, or as consequences naturally flowing from those sentences; but had handed down such an apprehension of Divine Truth, as was quite contrary to the new deductions thus propounded. These doctrines I will denominate as *Inferential Novelties*: and I would have it understood, that whenever I employ the term, I connect with it the quality of falsehood. All doctrines whatever, which



have been thus introduced, I consider to be false. A few examples will not be without their use.<sup>a</sup>

The first that I shall give is alike remarkable for its absurdity, for its enormous wickedness, and for the atrocious crimes which it was employed to sanction: for it was pretended to authorize the burning of heretics, and to justify the papal power of licentiating the rebellion of subjects and the dethronement of kings. Now this doctrine speaks to the following tenor: namely, that there are two lawful powers of governing mankind, the spiritual and the temporal; that both these powers belong to the Church; that the Church, by its own act, ought to exert only the spiritual power; but that it delegates the temporal power to princes; and that it has the same right to recall this delegation, which it had to bestow it. This impiety professes to be inferentially deduced from that part of the Gospel narrative, in which our blessed Saviour, shortly before his passion, says to his Apostles: "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one."<sup>b</sup> The apostles answer: "Lord, behold, here are two swords." From the two swords being in the hands of the apostles, it is inferred, that the two powers, both spiritual and temporal, belong to the Church. Our Lord

<sup>a</sup> Il suffit qu'on sçache le commencement d'une opinion pour être assuré, qu'elle ne sera jamais déclarée, être de foi, quoiqu'en puissent dire ceux qui s'échauffent le plus à la soutenir: puisqu'il est de foi, que l'église ne croira jamais que ce qu'elle a toujours

cru, quoiqu'elle puisse l'expliquer plus clairement quand elle le juge nécessaire. Fleury's Eccl. Hist. 5th Discourse, at the beginning of the 17th volume, chap. 13.

<sup>b</sup> Luke xxii. 36.



says : "It is enough:" He does not say, It is more than enough : therefore, says the inference, these powers are jointly sufficient, but both are necessary. But, our Saviour says again to Peter : " Put up thy sword into the sheath ;"<sup>c</sup> therefore, the Church is not itself to wield this temporal power, but to entrust it to the king, who is to administer it under the direction of the Church.<sup>d</sup> Such is the allegory of the two swords : if you ask its pretension to be regarded as an apostolical doctrine ; it seems to have first appeared about ten centuries after all the apostles were dead.<sup>e</sup> Such also is the general nature of Inferential Novelty : if the date of this doctrine be truly fixed, it must be false : it cannot possibly be true.

This is a case which strikingly discovers, what enormity of folly and guilt may lie involved in an Inferential Novelty. I will now produce another example ; which is peculiarly adapted to impart clear ideas relating to both the evil and the antidote. I will take my account from Epiphanius,<sup>f</sup> waving all regard to variations of statement, as to time and other circumstances : the case is, I believe, on every view of it, substantially correct as to the present purpose :<sup>g</sup> but if it be not, it may be considered hypothetical, in which character it will be no less useful as an example.

<sup>c</sup> John xviii. 11.

<sup>d</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. 5th Discourse, at the beginning of the 17th volume, chap. 12.

<sup>e</sup> Le premier auteur ou je trouve l'allegorie des deux glaives, est Geoffroi de Vendome au com-

mencement du douzieme siecle.

Fleury's Eccl. Hist. 5th Discourse, (contained in the 17th vol.) chap. 12.

<sup>f</sup> Hær. 37.

<sup>g</sup> See the Suppl. Rem.



It seems to have been about the year of our Lord 230, that there arose among the Asiatic Christians the heresy, till then unknown to them, of the Patripassians; by which word are denoted certain sectarians, who professed the doctrine, that it was God the Father, who suffered on the cross in the form of our blessed Saviour. This tenet was otherwise put forth, to the effect of saying, that Jesus Christ is God the Father: and it became afterwards enlarged into what is called Sabellianism: which doctrine may be thus enunciated, That there is only one Person of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Now concerning the tenet, thus arising at the above-named date, it is important to observe, as the characters of an Inferential Novelty, that it offers itself to our notice; first, as a principle elicited by reasoning from Scripture; and, secondly, as a principle, never known before. For it is to this effect that Epiphanius speaks. "Noetus dared, of himself, to say and to teach things, which neither the prophets nor the apostles had taught, nor the Church had either received from the beginning, or had even imagined." And, again, of the same Noetus, he says in effect: "On the first occasion of being interrogated, he denied the charge: and this he did, because no man before him had ever uttered this horrid and dreadful impiety."

These cases then, may explain the nature of Inferential Novelties. When they first appeared, the tradition of the Church knew nothing of them, either as scriptural declarations, or as scriptural consequences: that tradition, on the contrary, had con-



veyed impressions, quite repugnant to these innovations, and none the less clear on account of being hitherto undefined. For we may, I think, take it for granted, respecting what we now affirm relating to the distinction of Persons in the blessed Trinity, that it had been, as yet unknown to the formularies of the Church : nevertheless, we maintain that it was fully conformable to the previous faith and apprehension of Catholic Christians. Now this may well introduce the third kind of those religious doctrines, which I proposed to discriminate.

These are, *the Catholic definitions of the Faith*. They are framed for expressing the received and transmitted sense of the Church in contradiction of Inferential Novelties ; and were first placed in that form in which we now have them, when the necessity of them, both as to the matter of affirmation and the form of language, had been previously created by a new heresy. Thus, speaking with reference to former example, the inferential novelty is, There is only one Person of the Father and of the Son : and the definition of the Faith is, There is one Person of the Father and another of the Son. If the former of these positions be false, the latter must be true : and further consequences, similarly pursued, will evidence and substantiate the truth of the whole sentence, which speaks thus : There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.

Now it is obvious, respecting these definitions, that they claim, for the most part, their authority, not from the speaking the unaltered phrase of Scripture, but the sense of it : in other words, they



are not scriptural propositions, but scriptural consequences. For there can be no scriptural authority, unless it be either in a scriptural proposition, or in some truth which *follows* from what is read in Scripture : and the latter mode of speaking, however scriptural and certain in itself, is necessarily distinguished from the former, as a Scripture *consequence*. Of such consequences, enough has been said in vindicating the necessity. But something may here be added, to explain the difference between a Scripture Consequence and an Inferential Novelty : for the latter always assumes the mask of the former : and the clear distinction of the two seems to me to be greatly important.

This common property will be found in them both, that they do not express the unaltered language of Scripture. How they differ, may be understood from plain examples. Take, for instance, the following sentence : *It is the duty of children to reverence their parents*. We do not hesitate to claim this as a scriptural maxim : and why ? Not because it is read in Scripture : for it is not : but because it is an undeniable consequence of what is read there : Honour thy father and thy mother. Now, this consequence is so manifest, that it comes into the mind simultaneously with the original precept : he who admits the one cannot but admit the other : just as we might say of him who is conscious of having taken the whole, that he must at the same time be conscious of having taken the part. But it is not thus with the Inferential Novelty : in this case, the *pretended* consequence is neither obvious from the original truth, nor does it come



simultaneously into the mind. Now, consider this with relation to a previous example: I mean the heresy of Noetus. Is this a Scripture Consequence, or is it an Inferential Novelty? How can it be a truth, received simultaneously with the words of Scripture, if it first appears about the year 230? How can it be obvious, if it was first deduced about that time? How, on this supposition, could it have been, on its first publication, encountered with resistance, as a crafty and surreptitious addition to the true doctrine? And again: what, on this same view, will you say of that definition of the faith which is contrary to it? I mean, the definition contained in these words: There is one person of the Father and another of the Son. First, observe, that if the heresy be false, the contradiction of it must be true. Secondly, if this contradiction claim the force of an obvious consequence, spontaneously flowing from the original truth, and coming into the soul by one simultaneous admission: how can you wonder, that this should be an impression more natural, than that of supposing, that our Blessed Saviour is his own father, and his own son; that He sent Himself into the world; and that He is now sitting down at his own right hand?

We shall now be better prepared to regard, in its true light, the imputation of scholasticism to the doctrines of the Catholic Faith. The accusation is indeed so glaringly false, that I need not be anxious about the confuting of it: but I still think it highly important that it should be well *understood*. Now



in order that it may be so; it will be well, that I should first endeavour to delineate briefly the scholastical theology, and the character of the schoolmen.

This character cannot well be understood without going up to the anterior condition of things. It is to be noted then, respecting the theology of the primitive Church, beginning with the time of the Apostles, and reaching through a successive space of about one thousand years; that it was, as a general quality ascribed to it by competent judges, remarkably exempt from the agitation of useless questions. The ancient fathers were, for the most part, hostile to all needless employment of a disputatious talent. The real value of such a talent is indeed, on a right estimate, only subordinate to truth: and it seems as if, by them, no other value of it was contemplated. It is true, that you find in them a bright splendour of eloquent and powerful argumentation: but this was, for the most part, elicited only by necessity. Two causes chiefly awakened it into action: these were, to defend Christianity against infidels, or to protect its true doctrine against heretics. The first of these occurs in their Apologies; a word, by which is meant, defences of Christianity against heathens and infidels. In the case of heresy, you find, among many similar examples, the great powers of Athanasius provoked into exertion by the blasphemies of Arius. In other instances, possibly in many, you find the same individual concerned in both these forms of controversy: as was the case with Cyril of Alexandria, the adversary of both the



infidel Julian and the heretic Nestorius. Such is the general character which has been ascribed to the primitive theology: which may not improperly, as a name of distinction from the scholastic, be called the Positive theology. Its controversies were wholly defensive: the only aim was, to demolish falsehood and establish truth.

In the writings of William, abbot of St. Thierry, there is a passage, of which, as far as it applies to our present use, I would thus give the general effect. "That the doctrine of the Trinity has been put forth in so much fullness and perspicuity of explanation; was occasioned by an extreme subtilty of contention and controversy on the part of the Arians: in like manner, with respect to those important and intricate questions relating to the Incarnation of our Lord; the clearness and evidence of the Church's decisions were called forth by the errors of Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches, and many other heretics. Now had it not been owing to the necessity, thus imposed upon holy and learned men, of thus thinking and of speaking, *on some question then agitated*, more profoundly than others before them; their humble and unpresuming minds would have suppressed these matters in perpetual silence. It was not the practice of these holy fathers to defend any positions, but such as, at the time of their defence, were the subject of attack: unless perhaps, sometimes, in the progress of their discussions, they might, by the nature of their subjects, be compelled to do otherwise."<sup>h</sup> This re-

<sup>h</sup> Guillelmi S. Theodorici Abbatis Lib. de Corpore et Sanguine Domini, Cap. 11. in Tom. 4. Bibliothecæ Patrum Cisterciensium, pag. 138. Fleury's Eccl. Hist. B. 68. c. 69.



presentation is not only in itself instructive, but is the more peculiarly remarkable as having emanated from the very age of transition:<sup>i</sup> when the primitive modes of the ancient fathers were giving way to the new form of wanton and pragmatistical disputation. The date of this writing ought to be carefully noted: we may place it about the year 1140.

The progress of time produced a great change: the Positive theology was supplanted by the Scholastical, and the Fathers by the Schoolmen. The characteristics of the Scholastical system were these. It was a system of disputation on both sides. It was also a system, which put forth and discussed a vast multitude of useless questions. In these particulars, the Schoolmen were strikingly contrasted with their predecessors. Thus, the disputation of the fathers would, for the most part, be limited to modes, of which the following may serve for examples. They would prove, against the Gentile philosopher, that Christianity was true; and against the heretic, that Moses was a prophet sent by God, that the Word of God was not a creature, and that our blessed Saviour was man as well as God: but the reasoning was all on one side, and there was no collision of arguments till there was already an enemy to confront. On the contrary, with the Schoolmen it was common to propound, as matters of controversy, such questions as these: namely, Whether one angel loves another as himself by a natural love? Whether the angels who kept their first estate, were as many as those who

<sup>i</sup> See the 7th chap. of Fleury's *Traite des Etudes*.



fell: Whether, if children had been born to our first parents in the state of innocence, those children would, from the first, have been perfect in knowledge: Whether all the angels understand the discourse of one angel to another.<sup>k</sup>

It will aid my purpose, in point of both clearness and authority, if, in treating a dry subject, I here profit by a most instructive writer; whose pleasing modes of exhibiting truth are such, as to divest of their repulsive quality even the most uninviting topics. He speaks to this effect. "The fathers of the Church, being for the most part bishops, and men of much occupation, seldom wrote treatises unless except at the call of necessity, and then, for the defence of religion, in serious controversies, against the heretics and the gentiles: as for disputation, they meddled with no questions but such as had been actually brought forward by others." With these primitive theologians, the Scholastical doctors are, by the same author, contrasted after this manner. "They endeavoured to handle all the questions that they could, and to throw them into a form of systematic arrangement. They thought it needful, in order to the exercise of their scholars, and to the preparation of them for serious disputes against the enemies of the faith, that there should be an examination of all the subtilties, which the human understanding, in relation to such subjects, was capable of bringing forth, and an anticipation of all objections which might be started by inquisitive and restless minds. They had plenty of time for their work; and, as to the

<sup>k</sup> See the First part of the *Summa Theologica* of Aquinas.



means of pursuing it, these were provided for them in the logic and the metaphysics of Aristotle, accompanied with the commentaries of the Arabians. Thus, their practice was very similar to that of academies for fencing and horsemanship; in which young men, with a view to the improvement of strength and skill, are taught a great variety of things, which are rarely of use in real engagements with an enemy."<sup>1</sup>

But the most essential character of the Scholastical theology is, that of treating its subjects according to the principles of Aristotle, *wrongly understood*:<sup>m</sup> with respect to which words I must note that the wrong understanding is, in order to a due comprehension of this subject, a point of prominent magnitude for our regard. For it is not in truth from Aristotle, but from the misconception of him, that Scholasticism has derived both the deformity of its aspect, and its pestilent operation. As a particular of illustration, we may note the following. Aristotle among the various topics to be selected for the exercise of disputation, has, with a virtuous indignation, peremptorily forbidden those which involve an impiety:<sup>n</sup> in such encounters no

<sup>1</sup> Fleury's *Traité des Etudes*, c. 12

Hist. Lit. in *Sæculi Scholastici Conspectu*.

<sup>m</sup> Tandem relictæ simplici ac puriori veterum doctrina, in Scholis Christianis pene unice regnavit Scholastica Theologia; advocata in subsidium Aristotelis philosophia; eaque non ex Græcis fontibus, sed ex turbidis Arabum lacunis, ex versionibus male factis, male intellectis, hausta. Cave,

<sup>n</sup> Οὐ δει δὲ παν προβλημα, οὐδὲ πᾶσαν θεσιν, ἐπισκοπεῖν· ἀλλ' ἤν ἀπορησεῖεν ἂν τις τῶν λόγου δεομένων, καὶ μὴ κολάσεως, ἡ αἰσθησεως. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀπορουντες, ποτερον δει τοὺς θεοὺς τιμᾶν, καὶ τοὺς γονεῖς ἀγαπᾶν, ἡ οὐ, κολάσεως δεονται· οἱ δὲ ποτερον ἢ χιῶν λευκε ἡ οὐ, αἰσθησεως. Of which words, I would thus give



irreligious or wicked proposition was to be defended. Such was the pious scruple of a pagan: but these Christian philosophers knew nothing of it. In *their* disputatious strife, the respondent would be required, as a logical exercise, to defend some sound and necessary truth of Christianity: this truth the opponent was to attack: and thus, the nature of the case would frequently present an instance, of bold and elaborate controversy, in the form of blasphemous objections to the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, or to that of a Providence or of a future life. It may readily be supposed, what a tendency there would here be, to engender heresies and Inferential Novelties: when study and emulation were awakened in searching for, and propounding, the strongest arguments on the wrong side, and a field of distinction was provided for the champion of falsehood. The following is a remark of Dr. Waterland: he is speaking of the Schoolmen, and with relation to the doctrine of the Trinity: "By bringing up all the difficulties and perplexities, they could themselves invent, or elsewhere meet with; they furnished out matter for the enemies of the faith to lay hold on: *and it was from thence chiefly, that the Socinians afterwards borrowed their materials*

the general effect: "It is not every question which we ought to debate, but only such as may admit of doubt with men who are in want of rational conviction, as distinguished from men who are in want of punishment or of common sense. Those, for instance, who raise questions,

*Whether it is our duty to honour the gods and to love our parents; are men in want of punishment: and those again, who raise a question, Whether snow is white; are men in want of common sense."* Topic. Lib. I. c. 9. §. 9. Ed. Buhle.



*to work with.*"<sup>o</sup> Heretical statements were, consistently with such a plan, guaranteed by impunity: the most deceitful fallacies, and positions, most offensive to piety, might be screened from censure, by pleading the admitted privilege of scholastical disputation. And it is to be especially noted, that in these disputations, not only the form of reasoning was professedly drawn from Aristotle; but moreover the same philosopher was referred to for the authority of truth: his jurisdiction in the theological province was co-ordinate with that of Holy Writ: and a learned writer does not even scruple to rate his influence at a higher amount: for he says in effect, that St. Paul was driven from his chair, and the Stagirite advanced to the vacant occupation of it.<sup>p</sup>

I am anxious to portray Scholasticism, only so far as to impart a character, most clearly intelligible, to that single objection, with which I am now concerned. With this view, a few remarks may properly be added, relating to its origin, and the explanation of the name.

With respect to its origin; it has, I think, been supposed<sup>q</sup> to have sprung from the mode of controversy, by which the Christians sought to adapt themselves to the Mahometans and Jews, for the purpose of converting the latter to the faith of the gospel.<sup>r</sup> For the Saracens had now emerged from

<sup>o</sup> The Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, Chap. ii. at page 53 of the 5th vol. of Waterland's Works, Ed. 1823.

<sup>p</sup> *Loco Sancti Pauli per aliquot sæcula cathedram pæne solus tenuit Aristoteles.* Cave, Hist. Lit. in *Sæculi Scholastici Conspectu.*

<sup>q</sup> Fleury, *Traité des Etudes*, c. 7.

<sup>r</sup> It is thus that Fleury describes the Arabian philosopher. Chacun s'efforçoit de se distinguer par quelque nouvelle subtilité de logique ou de métaphysique. *Traité des Etudes*, c. 6.



that state of ferocious ignorance, which had characterized the primitive disciples of the false prophet. Among other Greek writings, which, by the diligence of the Syrian and Egyptian Christians,<sup>s</sup> had been translated into Arabic, were those of Aristotle: and his philosophy was regarded by them with uncommon veneration. It is a supposition perhaps not wholly inadmissible, that they may have learned from Aristotle, what Aristotle had never intended to teach; namely, how to write scientific and controversial books in the form of exact syllogism: a propensity, which might be very natural to them at a time, when just rising above the level of savages, with understandings probably similar to those of children: in whom, I think it is not uncommon to witness a peculiar delight in this frivolous employment of the reasoning power. Such may be considered one possible explanation of the origin of Scholasticism.

Another supposition might possibly ascribe it to a vain desire, of confuting heresy before it appeared: so that, whereas the ancient fathers, had never, generally speaking, debated questions on which there was no adversary to resist, the new polemicals should, as it were, take first possession of the ground, and present to every possible assailant, and in every future age, an impregnable front of syllogistical fortification. To have confuted all future as well as past heresies, was a glory ascribed to Thomas Aquinas: but most unjustly: for the labours of the angelic doctor, however well intended, have, in too many instances, been rather propi-

<sup>s</sup> Fleury, *Traité des Etudes*, c. 6.



tious to Inferential Novelties, than destructive of them.

There still remain a few words to be added, for the purpose of fixing the application of the *term* Scholastical: and this is the more needful, in order that we may not, in the examination of this subject, either bewilder ourselves, or be deceived by others, with a dubious ambiguity of language. With respect then to the term: I consider it to denote the practice, introduced into the *Schools of the Clergy*, of arguing, in order to mental improvement, on both sides of the question: and as to the men denoted as Schoolmen, or School divines, or Scholastical divines; I conceive that they took their rise and their name, from the practice, heretofore generally unknown to the church, of thus disputing, according to the supposed principles of Aristotle. It may perhaps assist my purpose of exact precision, if I explain my meaning with respect to the above named *Schools of the Clergy*. I mean then those seminaries, to which, some time previously to the era of Scholasticism, the studies of the future clergy had been transferred: these studies having, in the ancient church, been separately conducted in each diocese, and under the eye of each bishop: whereas, in after times, there arose a real or alleged necessity, for congregating the separate bodies of diocesan scholars into some few cities, such as Paris and Oxford; to which cities the name of University was subsequently applied. For this word was in its origin a term, for denoting the *whole* collective body of such scholars and their masters, dwell-

<sup>t</sup> See Bingham's *Origines Ecclesiasticæ*, Book iii. Ch. 1. §. 4.



ing in one town; the whole, I say, as distinguished from any separate establishments, or portions of them. And perhaps we shall not, in our endeavours to be exact as to the date of an epoch, wander far from truth, if we venture to say, that Scholasticism was the offspring of the university of Paris, and that it came not into existence before the year 1230.<sup>u</sup>

Now if it be necessary, and it certainly will not be improper, to state the *value* of the Scholastical Theology: I would express myself thus. Among all the stores of learning, if you would fix upon that department, which indicates the very lowest degradation of the human mind, you would find it in the Rabbinical literature of the Jews; after which, if you had to enquire for occupants of the lowest place but one, you might properly allot that position to the Schoolmen. A very learned and judicious author, if I remember right, professes to discover a resemblance between the respective writings of these two classes. The intrinsic worth of their joint productions, generally viewed, might be fixed, by saying, that it is worse than useless: its relative value consists in the illus-

<sup>u</sup> Ce fut alors [*dans le 13<sup>me</sup> siècle*] que l'on commença dans les écoles à s'écarter de la pure autorité, et à donner beaucoup au raisonnement. Aristote devint à la mode, et on fit grand cas des subtilités de la dialectique et de la métaphysique, que l'on avait empruntées des Arabes. . . . . des Chrétiens c. 65. La troisième [méthode de théologie] fut celle des *Scholastiques*: qui traitèrent la doctrine de l'écriture et des pères par la forme et les organes de la dialectique et de la métaphysique, tirées des écrits d'Aristote: c'est ainsi que la définit le Cardinal du Perron. Idem, *Traité des Etudes*, c. 7. Ainsi la SCHOLASTIQUE l'emportait sur la POSITIVE. Fleury, Mœurs



tration of folly : but the folly, thus explained, is of a description, which it is far from unimportant to comprehend. For an insight into the driveling of the Rabbins will powerfully elucidate the arguments of St. Paul, and may even discover occasionally, in the discourses of our blessed Lord, a pointed force, which would otherwise be latent : and as to the Schoolmen, the doctrines of the Church of England may derive a valuable elucidation from their writings. It is hoped, that these remarks will not be thought digressive from the professed effort of the present chapter.

Having now defined the subject, we may soon adjust the question. We have seen, who were the Schoolmen : as to the anterior race of theologians, so far at least as we are concerned with them, they are commonly known by the name of the Fathers : and it was by the earlier generations of these fathers, that were framed all those definitions of the Faith, which are contained in the three Creeds. We have then to view before us two classes of men : first, *that portion* of the fathers who originated these definitions ; and secondly, the Schoolmen, whom we have now described. And the sum of the whole matter is this : that the latest among the first of these classes were all dead, at least five hundred years before the eldest of the second class was born. The Schoolmen therefore could have no share in framing these creeds.

But we must not drop the question here. We are to observe respecting those definitions of the



Faith, which are branded with a Scholastical name; that they are principally, those portions of the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, which relate to the holy mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Now with reference the strict acceptation of the term Scholastical; the falsehood and the impossibility of the accusation thus applied, has been shewn. But though the confutation be at once clear to the understanding of a child, and irresistible to common sense: yet you must be prepared to find the controversialist, starting up, like a Proteus, in a different shape. Not but that I think it highly probable, with some of these disputants, that if you chuse to understand them according to the common import of language; they have no objection. That it is to say; if you are willing, on a view of their representations of Scholasticism, really to believe, that the doctrine of the blessed Trinity was first promulgated by Albert the Great, or by Bonaventura; they may, for what I know, be well content, that you should acquiesce in that conviction. But when, after a slight attention to facts, it is found too gross to vindicate a glaring imposture: you may then be prepared for a different method of assault. "True," it may be said, "Scholasticism, as you have described it, did not exist before the thirteenth century: but though the name, and the men, were not more ancient, yet the same theological character was: there was, in much earlier times, the same disposition to subtilize on the doctrines of the Faith, and to complicate and disfigure, with logical deductions and technicalities, the simplicity of the gospel." This



use of the term may possibly be claimed in vindication of Dr. Samuel Clarke: I will proceed to an abbreviated citation of his words. It is thus that he speaks with relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. "With regard to *Scholastic* and Philosophical inquiries concerning metaphysical natures, essences, substances, and subsistences; with other the like notions, which men have spun, as spiders do cobwebs, out of their own brain: had these things never been meddled with, and had men contented themselves with what is plainly revealed in Scripture; the peace of the Catholic Church, and the simplicity of Christian faith and worship, had possibly never been disturbed."<sup>v</sup> Thus far Dr. Clarke.

It appears then to be alleged, that although Scholasticism never existed before a certain date; yet that, as to the habit of mind, and the intellectual perverseness, thus denoted, this had existed long before: and that it had, long before the thirteenth century, exerted itself in a vicious combination of logic with christianity. I am the last man in the world to deny this position. But then, I beg to put in this question: *Where* did it exist? Was it on the side of the Catholic or the heretic? To speak plain and close to the point: Was it on the side of those who framed the Definitions, of which we are now treating? Why the fact is, that these very definitions were all of them called into existence by the anterior propagation of Inferential Novelties, and for the purpose of repelling these

<sup>v</sup> Clarke's Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, Introduction, page xxxiv. 3rd Ed. 1732.



novelties from the Church. Examine them one by one. In the Nicene Creed you have the word substance: this forsooth offends you: it is not scriptural, but Aristotelian and Logical. And who was it that occasioned the employment of this term? Was it wantonly and spontaneously done by the Council of Nice? Or was it occasioned by a previous Inferential Novelty on the part of Arius, the heretic and logician? Again: the Church employs in its definitions the word Trinity and the word Persons: but this was never done, till there had first appeared that Inferential Novelty, which it was necessary to renounce, and impossible to renounce without the instrumentality of suitable words. So also, the Church is very positive in asserting two natures in Christ: you may perhaps object, that this language is metaphysical: but this was never required before the first emergence of that Inferential Novelty, which had denied his human nature. Again: the doctrine of the Church declares most peremptorily that "God and man is one Christ," and insists upon our believing that there is in Christ but one person: but this definition was not introduced, till it was called forth by those, who had previously taught, that in our blessed Saviour there were two persons, namely, the Eternal Word and Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ was not God. Once more: we are to hold the faith of the blessed Trinity, "neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance." This, you may object, is exceedingly metaphysical indeed: to require this, as an Article of Faith, is what Dr. Clarke might have called, *imposing things much harder to be*



*understood than the Scripture itself.*<sup>x</sup> But now, with respect to the ideas thus presented: were they not first called into existence by those heretical novelties, which were espoused by the Patripassians and the Arians? And was it possible to renounce or to confute such heresies, without language for the expression of ideas, which it thus became necessary to represent? Such is the true character of all those definitions of the faith, with which we are concerned, and which are slanderously stigmatized with the reproach of Scholasticism. "The truth is," says Dr. Waterland, "the very distinguishing character of the Trinitarians, in the days of the Fathers, was, *their resting their cause wholly upon scripture and tradition*; as the distinguishing character of the Antitrinitarians was, *their building mostly upon logical or metaphysical quirks and subtilities.*"<sup>y</sup>

It will thus appear, that Scholasticism, if we are to assign to the term this second signification; was so far from being the parent of our definitions of the faith, that it was in truth the monster which they were designed to strangle. And you are specially to keep in mind, what has already been urged; namely, that the church, when it repudiates a heresy, is not at liberty to choose its own language: the form of the renunciation must be adapted to the form of the heresy: every contradiction of falsehood must, if it would be exact, employ the

<sup>x</sup> See the 8th page of his Introduction, as referred to above.

53 of vol. 5 of Waterland's works, Ed. 1823. See the Supplementary Remarks.

<sup>y</sup> Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, c. ii. at page



same expressions as the falsehood itself: and it cannot be an effectual contradiction, unless it be either exact in identity of terms, or fully comprehensive of their import. If the tenets of heresy are expressed in language which is logical, or metaphysical, or mathematical, or, if you please, scholastical: the modes of renouncing those tenets must take their form accordingly. The church must speak that language, which is needful for her purpose: if it should thus happen that her words are occasionally metaphysical, it is a case, not of her own choosing, but a case of necessity imposed by the antagonist: blasphemy must not be received as the doctrine of salvation, on the plea, that it is metaphysical.

In treating this subject, I have been most especially anxious, not so much that the objection should be confuted, as that it should be well understood. For the confutation is a mere work of common sense. But the understanding of it may be serviceable to an important use.

In the first place, the unlearned reader may thus find good reason to withhold his confidence from some of those, who, in sacred and awful matters, would willingly undertake the conduct of his understanding. For look at the present objection. Is this the allegation of men, who understand what they are talking about? If so, it is a manifest imposture, emanating from a wilful contempt of truth. Is it, on the other hand, a mere mistake of ignorance? Then I will beg you to reflect, that ignorance may possibly be as pernicious as dishonesty:



and that ignorance cannot exculpate, when it is combined with presumption, and when it is the quality of a mind, which dogmatizes upon vital subjects, with all the self importance of conscious learning. If you tell me, that such a doctrine is Platonical, and that such a doctrine is Scholastical : I have a right to expect of you, that you have made yourself so far acquainted with Plato and the Schoolmen, as to understand the language you employ : but you will not expect of me, in an age of scanty knowledge and prolific of imposture, that I should consider you at once accredited, by the use of learned words, in the pretensions of a learned man.

In the second place, the reader is thus once more guarded against a perilous misconception, relating to our Definitions of the Faith. These definitions are not to be considered as having been reasoned out by ingenious men, and as having been then first, as augmentations, taken into the body of the faith, when they were first introduced. They were first brought forth for the suppression of Inferential Novelties.

You cannot but see, with respect to these definitions, how different is their character, when regarded from these different points of view. On the one hand, you find them designated as scholastical : and you are to bear in mind, that the term of accusation, thus used, does not, on the most charitable construction of it, mean, what any man ought to be expected to understand, till it has been first explained to him : but that it means a certain busy, pragmatical, officious exercise of the logical talent, which reasons upon the data furnished by



holy writ, and thus professes to have reached discoveries, which nobody ever made before : thus labouring for a new induction of truths, in a case, where there cannot possibly be any other induction than of falsehood. On the other hand, you regard these expositions as the acts of an authorized and authoritative judgment, striking down innovations, and insisting upon maintaining inviolate that doctrine, which has come down from the beginning. And you are to bear in mind, that this is done in the only way that is possible : so that, if the souls of Christians are to be protected from heretical defilement, it must be done in this way or not at all. You may thus understand more clearly, the difference between Inferential Novelties on the one hand, and Definitions of the Faith on the other : and you may thus see clearly, to which of these classes belong the creeds of the church of England. If now, the reader would see, in modern times, an example of doctrine, which realizes the character of an Inferential Novelty ; I think I may venture to refer him to a work of Dr. Samuel Clarke himself : it is entitled "The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity." That this work is Inferential, must appear from the fact, that it professes to evolve its doctrine, by careful and laborious investigation, from scriptural evidence ; and that it truly claims the full character of an Inferential Novelty, may, I think, be seen from this ; that Dr. Clarke's Scripture-doctrine, unless viewed by me under an unhappy defect of learning, is, as far as records will evince, a form of theology never known to mankind, till first propounded by him in the eighteenth century. How unhappy, if his doctrine



be true and necessary, must have been the condition of all Christians who lived before him!

A few remarks remain now to be offered, and with these I shall conclude the second part of this treatise. However anxious to maintain the cause I have undertaken; I am equally solicitous, that this should not be done by any methods, but such as are legitimate. I feel, that even truth is not to be maintained by exaggerated statements. The point now remaining, is, to afford, in relation to this important subject, a summary representation of historical truth, and a statement of general deductions from records, too voluminous for allegation. To draw this representation from the impressions of my own mind, I am not willing: for I know that such impressions are liable to error; and others, as well as I, are aware, that all such impressions are liable to be warped by predilection. I would therefore dismiss all language of assertion, and refer my considerations to the decision of competent judges: premising, that a competence of judgment cannot, in this case, exist, without a previous study of the monuments and records of the church. To a mind thus actually qualified, I would refer it, whether the testimonies of learning are concurrent with the views here proposed: and of the mind which purposes, by *future* research, to realize a due qualification of judgment; of that mind I would entreat, that attention should be bent upon special inquiry, and kept alive to discover, whether such views are, or are not, substantiated by proof.

Suppose then it shall be alleged: That our creeds



are the fruit of a tyrannical domination over human souls ; that they demand an assent to propositions, too complex and intricate for general comprehension ; and that Christianity is thus deprived of its native aspect, and put into a form, less adapted to the reception of ordinary minds, and consequently less suited to universal diffusion. Let us then scrutinize the whole course of time, during which were first propounded these definitions of the faith : and let us, on a view of records, consider, whether the following be not, generally speaking, a true statement of the case : namely, That it was always felt, that no benefit was, in the abstract, done to religion, by these particular statements ; that they tended, on the contrary to encumber it ; that the Gospel possessed a high recommendation in that simplicity of form, in which it came from God ; that it could not be learned more easily, by enlarging the number of theological dogmas, nor be rendered more intelligible, by metaphysical words ; and that all men, however humble their capacities, however unqualified for the apprehension of logical subtleties, were equally embraced in the Divine purpose of Salvation. In a word, is it not to be discovered as a striking characteristic of this primitive era, that there was, on the part of Catholic Christians, a strong unwillingness to embarrass the doctrine of salvation with new phrases and new definitions ? And does it not appear, respecting that logical talent, which some affect to call scholastical, and to represent as the favourite instrument of ecclesiastical dogmatism ; that it has been, not the weapon of that authority from which our creeds have emanated, but



the weapon of hostility, to which that authority was necessitated, in the present structure of these formularies, to adapt its measures of resistance? Suppose then it shall appear, that a disadvantage to religion has thus been occasioned. With whom lies the blame? Who are they, by whom the offence cometh? Surely the blame must lie with those who created the necessity, not with those who submitted to it; with those who made the aggression, not with those who provided the only lawful and possible defence.



## CHAPTER XI.

## ON THE EXCOMMUNICATIONS OF THE CHURCH.

**I**T is not without great reluctance that I enter on the present subject. But it is the nature of my leading design, to be connected with various branches of subordinate consideration; each of which is sufficiently important to afford matter for an independent treatise, but which nevertheless cannot be overlooked, without leaving undefended some point, essential to a due vindication. My situation indeed is similar to that, represented by a just similitude of Chrysostom; who, while treating of a subject not very remote from my own, speaks to this effect. “The city which is well fortified in every part, may laugh at the besieger: but if there be only one small space of insecurity, all its strong ramparts will have been built in vain.”<sup>z</sup>

The Excommunications of the Church are a topic, from which have been derived objections to church formularies; which objections, if true, would be fatal to them. Now it is to be noted, that the subject of excommunication is inseparably interwoven

<sup>z</sup> De Sacerdotio, lib. iv. c. 4. p. 56. Edn. Lips. 1825.



with Articles of Faith : of Articles thus propounded, some, as in the Nicene and Constantinopolitan creeds, are accompanied with an explicit excommunication of such as hold the contrary opinions : in all other Articles of Faith the same is virtually, if not explicitly, done : for these articles are terms of communion, and he that embraces them not, does, by his refusal, incur the forfeiture of Communion.

In order to convey a just idea of the necessity of handling this subject ; I will first produce, in the following quotation, a specimen of the attacks which have thus been made upon our Creeds. Observe, I pray, that it is only a specimen : it is needless for me to say, how common such objections are ; how presumingly they are advanced, and how ignorantly they are admired and adopted.

“That bishop Bull, a Protestant prelate, should receive the thanks of the whole body of the clergy of France, for his *Judicium Ecclesiæ Catholicæ*, is a singular circumstance : but it doth not, in our estimation, reflect upon him any high degree of honour. The occasion upon which these congratulations were sent to him, detracts greatly from their value. Had he been distinguished by such a mark of respect, merely on account of his general defence of the doctrine of the Trinity ; it might have been deemed honourable to him, as that doctrine hath so commonly been admitted by Christian churches. But to be thanked by a National Assembly of Roman Catholic Clergy, *for vindicating anathemas* ; can confer no true glory on any man. Indeed, it gives us pain to think, that so pious,



excellent, and learned a prelate as Dr. Bull, should have applied his abilities to so unhappy a purpose. The *curses* annexed to the Athanasian and Nicene creeds have been very much disliked by many, who firmly believed the creeds themselves. Nothing in fact can be more contrary to sound reason, and the tenets and spirit of the Gospel, than such *curses*. Is it possible for a liberal mind to imagine, that a man's salvation shall depend on his reception of a doctrine so abstruse, mysterious, and involved in difficulties, as *that*<sup>a</sup> of the Trinity? Will not the most ardent piety, and the most sincere and earnest investigation of truth, avail anything in the sight of God, if a person should happen to be mistaken in his opinion? Are some of the brightest ornaments of the Church of England (for such might be mentioned) to be anathematized here, and to be excluded from eternal life hereafter, because they embraced different sentiments from those of the Nicene fathers? Most men of knowledge and literature, in the present age, will, we trust, discard all such ungenerous ideas."<sup>b</sup>

Now to speak first, with specific reference to the extract before us: It would be highly desirable that gentlemen, who undertake to instruct the public, should first condescend to disentangle the confusion of their own ideas. This writer speaks of the curses annexed to the Athanasian and Nicene

<sup>a</sup> The word is thus marked in the original, as emphatical. Whether the author means thus to denote, *in general*, the doctrine of the Trinity, or either of those particular expositions thus re-

ferred to; is not for me to determine.

<sup>b</sup> From an Annotation at the end of the Life of bishop Bull, in the 2nd Ed. of the Biographia Britannica.



creeds. I can find none. In the Nicene creed I find it decreed thus against the maintainers of certain opinions; "Let him be excommunicated." In the Athanasian, I find it said respecting the Catholic faith; "Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he will<sup>c</sup> perish everlastingly." And again: "Which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved." I can see nothing of malediction in these words, but quite the contrary. Our Saviour has said: "He that believeth not shall be condemned." Now it certainly rests with the Church to define that absence of faith, which incurs this condemnation: and her declarations upon this point are, only acts of fidelity to God and of charity to man: the more plain her declarations, the more conspicuous her fidelity and her charity. The case is quite parallel to that set forth by the prophet Ezekiel. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his

<sup>c</sup> It is important to remark, the Creed; as may be readily that *will* and not *shall*, is the seen from numberless instances in proper word: the use of these our authorized version of the verbs having much varied since Bible. the date of this translation of



iniquity ; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die : because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, *he shalt surely live, because he is warned ; also thou hast delivered thy soul.*"<sup>a</sup>

Thus far I have regarded, what I would hope to be, a case of involuntary misapprehension. It is God only who knows the hearts of men. Should it be a case of wilful perversion ; it involves in it a most malignant depravity and hatred of the truth. In either case, it may serve as an example of prevailing and dangerous misrepresentation. It must be noted respecting such errors, that, however easy of exposure, they are not such as to obviate the need of confutation. For it cannot be denied, that they derive countenance from theological names, to which, whether due or not, great weight has been attached. If ever *such* authority had the power of transmuting falsehood into truth ; it would be so in this instance. It is therefore imperative, that we should examine the real nature of the anathema ; but only so far, as is needful for the design of this treatise. My chief aim will therefore be, not to embrace, after the manner of a canonist, an extended discussion of the whole subject ; but only to shew, that the anathema

<sup>a</sup> Ezek. iii. 17—21.



does not, on a true construction of its meaning, carry any import of malediction or malevolence, nor warrant any departure from the law of universal charity.

It is to be observed then, that there are in an excommunication, two leading properties. Of these, the first is, that of separating a man from the Church; the second is, the separating of that man from Christian intercourse. We will shew then, the nature of each of these leading properties, considered in themselves; and we will shew farther, with respect to each of them, separately viewed, that every departure from this character has been a departure from the institution of Christ. Here we must have an attentive regard to the twofold necessity with which we are engaged. First, the discipline of excommunication is to be vindicated as an essential part of Christianity: Secondly, Christianity itself is to be vindicated from the falsehoods, with which this discipline has been reproached.

With regard then to the act of separating a man from the church: the anathema, when lawfully incurred, is the judgment of God; when lawfully pronounced, it is only a declaration of that judgment: and the declaration is such, as the governors of the church must not, at the peril of their souls, either withhold or pronounce, otherwise than according to the will of God. Diotrophes is rebuked by St. John,<sup>e</sup> for unduly inflicting this judgment: two

<sup>e</sup> 3 John.



primeval Bishops are rebuked by Christ himself, for withholding it.<sup>f</sup>

Let us see now, how far, according to the views of Scripture, this proceeding is open to the charge of malediction. St. Paul excommunicates a sinner, with a view to the salvation of his soul;<sup>g</sup> he excommunicates a heretic, with a view to the correction of his life:<sup>h</sup> this latter purpose having, doubtless, a reference to the same ultimate end. You cannot find one single case in Scripture which wears a different aspect.

You may ask: how can you promote a man's salvation by driving him out of the church? The question may admit a long answer: I shall content myself to give a sufficient one: first however premising, for the fuller vindication of charity, that the case is that of repelling him, whom there is no power to retain. To proceed: it will often happen that a sinner, with regard to very heinous provocations, will be doing that, which is right in his own eyes: but he now views his conduct under the judgment of another, and under a judgment authorized by God. He is thus placed in an awful state: it is for himself to consider, whether he will set at nought that judgment, or deny the validity of it: he cannot but know, that a mistake on this point will affect his salvation. The church has no power from God to absolve the impenitent sinner or the heretic: and would you, while a man is lying in such a state, from which no human power can release, suffer him to remain, outwardly and deceptively but not really, in that fold, which belongs

<sup>f</sup> Rev. ii.

<sup>g</sup> 1 Cor. v. 5.

<sup>h</sup> 1 Tim. i. 20.



only to the heirs of Divine Glory? Shall he be fed with the eucharist, and thus taught to feel himself absolved; while you well know, that that sacrament, in the absence of a right faith and a repentant heart, conveys no absolution, but that he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself? You cannot but see the necessity of the case: you cannot be blind to its merciful operation. The incestuous Corinthian was not destroyed, but reclaimed, by St. Paul's anathema: and we have reason to hope, that this judgment was finally effectual to his everlasting welfare. You may see then, how true is the representation of Augustine, when he speaks to this effect. "The severity of the church is an effect of its charity and of its mildness. When a Christian has justly incurred excommunication, it is for his correction that he is separated from the church: if he continues impenitent, it is his own act and deed which cuts him off from the fold."<sup>i</sup> And you are always to remember, as an inseparable part of the case, that the gate of mercy, which was once opened at baptism, will again be open to repentance. The judgments of St. Paul, in the cases above referred to, were necessary for the salvation of the offenders: would you suffer these men, till death, to remain in the way of perdition, rather than awaken them to leave it? Surely the judgment of Cyprian is more reasonable than this: he speaks of an undue release from excommunication, as an act most hurtful to the sinner, and more characteristic of a butcher

<sup>i</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 20. c. 46.



than of a shepherd.<sup>k</sup> Let it be again remembered, that such severity in the governors of the church, is not discretionary, but imposed by God: their office of binding and loosing, being according to Jerom,<sup>l</sup> similar to that of the Levitical priests, who did not inflict the leprosy nor cleanse the leper, but pronounce upon the difference. The judgment of the church is only declaratory of the will of God:<sup>m</sup> and that will cannot be affected by any want of human fidelity. I would thus, in stating the case, avail myself of the words of Origen:<sup>n</sup> “The heretic and the unrepenting sinner, places himself out of the camp of the church, though he be not formally expelled by the sentence of the Bishop: on the other hand, the man unjustly expelled, suffers no ill from the unrighteous decree: the former is out of the church, while he seems to be in; and the latter is in, while to the eye of man, he seems to be out.” The cases of the heretic and of the infidel, are, in fact, according to the judgment of St. Paul, much the same: the former is condemned of *himself*;<sup>o</sup> and the latter judgeth *himself* unworthy of eternal life.<sup>p</sup>

Indeed, the merciful character of the anathema is manifest throughout the New Testament. Our Lord indeed has said: “If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”<sup>q</sup> But then, you are to consider

<sup>k</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. vi. Service.  
c. 42.

<sup>l</sup> As quoted in the Liber Sententiarum, L. 4. Dist. 18. Art. 6.

<sup>m</sup> As is also the case in the denunciations of the Commination

<sup>n</sup> As quoted in the Lib. sent. L. 4. Dist. 18. Art. 8.

<sup>o</sup> Tit. iii. 11.

<sup>p</sup> Acts, xiii. 46.

<sup>q</sup> Matt. xviii. 17.



the conduct due from a Christian to a heathen : and this you may learn from the parable of the good Samaritan. On the whole, we may sum up our present investigation, by stating, to this effect, the judgment of Augustine : “The law which requires us to love our neighbour, is a rule, which admits no exception of any man.”<sup>r</sup>

We will now advert to the second leading quality of an excommunication ; namely, that it separates from Christian society. But this is to be understood with limitations. It seems to me erroneous to consider this, as the chief and primary design of an anathema. I do not therefore agree with Vincentius Lirinensis, when he so expresses himself, that he seems to embrace this view of the subject.<sup>s</sup>

The primary design is, agreeably to my previous statement, that of separating from the Church, *by a formal act*, the man who has already, *by his crime or misbelief*, virtually separated himself. Now the requirement, thus devolving upon the members of Christ, will be best understood, as indeed every law is, from the *reason* of it. This is, partly, for the purpose of preserving other Christians from contamination : we all know, that sin is a leprosy, and that evil communications corrupt good manners. Secondly, it is for the correction of the sinner ; in order that, finding himself thus, by a righteous and

<sup>r</sup> Quod nullum hominem exceperit, qui præcepit, ut proximum diligamus ; et ipse in evangelio Dominus ostendit, et Paulus apostolus. De Doctrina Christiana. I. 31.

<sup>s</sup> *Anathema sit*, inquit ; id est, separatus, segregatus, exclusus, ne unius ovis dirum contagium innoxium gregem Christi venenata permixtione contaminet. Commonitorium, c. 8. ed. 1836.



authoritative decree, separated from intercourse with good men, and avoided as a pestilence, he may be driven to look inwardly ;<sup>t</sup> that he may weigh the nature of actions, thus awfully condemned ; and that he may thus be brought, first to compunction, and then to amendment. But these reasons are not such, as to suspend other laws of duty, or to prohibit modes of intercourse to which they do not apply : they do not cancel the obligations of parent and offspring, or of domestic consanguinity ; they do not require the desertion of a mechanic or a tradesman, and the consequent infliction of penury upon himself and his children : least of all do they prohibit the access of charity for the relief of suffering, or command, that a wicked man, on the ground of unlawfulness to speak to him or approach him, should be suffered to perish. The only intercourse thus forbidden, is that kind of familiar society, which lies exposed to moral contagion ; and which is quite distinct from the necessary commerce of life and the dispensations of charity. That this is the true character of these censures ; will appear from the plain purport of various scriptural passages ; and conformably to these we shall be able to explain others, which have been most injuriously perverted and abused.

Observe, how St. Paul expresses himself relating to the incestuous Corinthian. “ I wrote unto you

<sup>t</sup> I do not know that I am entitled to claim this as the meaning of those words, (occurring at 2 Thess. iii. 14,) *ἵνα εντραπη*, which are rendered, *that he may be ashamed* ; but I would submit, whether these words may not allow of any one of the following significations, namely, *that he may be humbled* ; or *that he may be converted* ; or *that his stubbornness may be subdued*.



in an epistle not *to company* with fornicators ; yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters : for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not *to keep company*, if any man *that is called a brother*, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no, *not to eat*. . . . Therefore, put away from yourselves that wicked person.”<sup>u</sup> You may here remark, what is that peculiar intercourse which Christians are forbidden to have with evil men. If you desire proof, that this judgment involved no departure from fraternal benevolence ; remark these following words in application to the same delinquent. “ Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears ; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. But if I have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part : that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love toward him.”<sup>x</sup>

Such is the scriptural view : such is primitive truth. And this seems to have been long handed down in a pure and orthodox tradition. Thus, St. Paul says ; “ If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company

<sup>u</sup> 1 Cor. v. 9.

<sup>x</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 4.



with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”<sup>y</sup> On these words it may be noted first, that they verify my previous statement: that while the society of the excommunicated was to be avoided, it was not *every* mode of intercourse, (such for instance as the admonitions of charity) which was thus forbidden. But now observe, *traditionally*, the blessed martyr Polycarp, contemporary with Paul: observe how, after the following manner, he echoes the voice, how he reiterates and expands the precept, of Paul: the case, as I understand it, being one of excommunication. “I am exceedingly grieved concerning Valens, who was once a Presbyter among you. I warn you therefore to abstain from his crime. I am exceedingly grieved on account of both him and his wife. May the Lord grant to them the grace of true repentance! Be ye also therefore sober-minded in this matter; and as to such men, *count them not as enemies, but reclaim them as frail and wandering members; so as to make sure the calling and election of the whole body of you.* For by doing thus, you are building up yourselves to a more advanced piety.”<sup>z</sup> Again: we have seen how St Paul declares “the much affliction and anguish of heart” with which he exercised his apostolical power. See now how faithfully this is represented by Chrysostom, and how, after three centuries, there still remained a right impression, relating to the merciful character of ecclesiastical judgments. He speaks to this effect. “The ancients exercised this power, as if they were plucking out their right eye.

<sup>y</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 14.<sup>z</sup> Routhii Opuscula, pag. 18. Ed. Oxon. 1840.



We must anathematize heresies, but we must always use tenderness towards heretics.”<sup>a</sup> Somewhat earlier we discover Origen, thus treading in the steps of St. Paul, and verifying the testimony of Chrysostom. “It is sometimes necessary to rebuke sinners, and to do it openly, that others may be afraid to offend. It is even necessary to exert the ecclesiastical power, of delivering the offender over to Satan. But this must be done rarely, and we must not regard the sinner as an enemy but admonish him as a brother.”<sup>b</sup> And in the time of Cyprian, the clergy of Rome, in a letter to those of Carthage, describe, to the following tenour, the behaviour they had observed towards certain lapsed and excommunicated Christians. “We have separated them from ourselves, but we do not abandon them, lest they should become worse: we entreat you to do the same, and to raise the courage of those who are fallen, that they may gather fortitude to make reparation for their fault.”<sup>c</sup>

Whence then, did in fact, arise the grounds for those harsh constructions, connected, thus inveterately, with the censures of the church? A true view of the causes in which they *did* originate, will satisfy us more fully of this: they did *not* originate in the Gospel: they did not emanate from the primeval light: they are utterly repugnant to the practice of the ancient church. To this practice, we must have an attentive regard, if, as in other

<sup>a</sup> Orig. in Matt. xx. 25. [Tom. 3. pag. 724, 725. Ed. 1740.]  
Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. xix. c. 9.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. b. vi. c. 19.

<sup>c</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. vi c.



cases, we would understand our subject by example, as well as by rule : our only rule being the word of God, and our best exemplification of it being derived from that administration, which was closely subsequent upon its promulgation ; at a time when the government of the first apostles was either existing, or at least, recent and still efficacious ; and when the light of heavenly doctrine, was brightly reflected in the lives of Christians. We shall thus see most clearly the reality of the truths we are concerned to maintain : church discipline will be the better vindicated, if its essential use be thus, by considerations of time and other distinctive marks, separated from its abuses : it will thus be seen, that the abuses may justly awaken our abhorrence, without impairing a true estimate of the legitimate use. To ascertain the real causes of such enormities, will yield a more triumphant justification of that, to which they have been falsely attributed : and the difference between the merciful and the cruel, will thus be substantiated, as the respective characters of truth and falsehood, of religion and imposture. As to the maxims of persecution ; if we will only watch the time and manner of their first appearance among the pretended doctrines of Christianity : we shall be the more fully convinced of their false and supposititious character.

We find then, that the anathema involves in it an act of separation from Christian society : it is not denied, that this is the scriptural import of it : and we have already considered the limitations,



which properly belong to the subject. And when was this right estimate first departed from? The earliest case which has occurred to me, dates itself about the year 370; and the abbé Fleury seems to consider it in the same light.<sup>d</sup> I am sorry to say, that we find it connected with the name of Basil the Great. Standing however at this epoch, it betrays the feature of an innovation upon what was both primitive and true: and we find not, either in the time, which was the fourth century; or in the person, who was not one of the first apostles; any characters of authority for addition to an unchangeable faith. The case is this. Athanasius notifies to Basil the name of a brutal person, whom, on account of his crimes, Athanasius had excommunicated. This notification we consider to have been made for the purpose, that Basil might not, in ignorance, admit the guilty man to communion. Basil replies to the effect of certifying to Athanasius, that he had published the excommunication, and that the excommunicated would be, to all the faithful, a subject of execration, with whom no intercourse would be held either of fire, of water, or of shelter.<sup>e</sup> We may thus mark the small beginnings of dreadful atrocity in after time. We have considered the true construction of the scriptural texts, relating to this subject: we may here notice the first visible outflowing of crimes and

<sup>d</sup> On voit ici quelles etaient deslors les suites de l'excommunication, meme pour le commerce de la vie civile.—Eccl. Hist. b. xvi. c. 23.

<sup>e</sup> Αποτροπαιον αυτον παντες ήγησονται, μη πυρος, μη ύδατος, μη σκεπης αυτω κοινωνουντες. Epist. 61. See the note of the Benedictine Editor.



calamities, derived from a false and innovating construction of them. How this false interpretation became current, I cannot explain. In our own language, the word *communicate* has a twofold import, applying in one sense generally to all the ordinary commerce of life, and in another exclusively to eucharistical communion: the case was similar with the Greek: and should it happen that the change thus arose, it will not be the only instance, in which a dreadful crime has had no other defence than an equivocation. Before we quit this part of our subject, we must note, as having occurred in the year 448, an ulterior step in this corruption of primitive discipline. This was at the Council of Constantinople, held in the case of Eutyches: the sentence of which council, as pronounced by the patriarch Flavian, denounces the judgment of excommunication on all who should speak to that heretic or frequent his society.<sup>f</sup>

A few years onward brings to light another grand departure from the primeval church. The date in this instance, is about the year 383. Here occurs, as far as I am aware, the earliest record of combining with an anathema, an imprecation of judgment on the soul.<sup>g</sup> The false doctrines thus denounced, are certain opinions connected with the heresy of Apollinaris; and the

<sup>f</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 27. c. 29.

<sup>g</sup> A case may possibly be alleged, which is by a few years more ancient. It occurs in the 288th epistle of Basil: but on comparing this with a similar

case, contained in the epistle immediately foregoing, the language does not seem to me such, as to preclude a different construction. [Basil. Opp. Tom. 3. pag. 427. Ed. 1730.]



author of the language is Gregory Nazianzen. "Let him be deprived of the Divine grace: let him be numbered among the murderers of Christ; let him never behold the glory of Christ's coming."<sup>h</sup> Such are the imprecations of Gregory: though little remote in time, how widely estranged in sentiment, from the feeling of St. Paul, who anathematized the sinner in order that his soul might be saved!

It will not be amiss, that we should here pause for a moment of reflection. The study of the ancient fathers has been justly extolled by all learned and judicious divines: but this, like all other studies, must not be separated from the cautions of wisdom. You desire, by this avenue, to reach a security against supposititious traditions, and against false interpretations of Holy Writ: and you do well. But you must reflect, that it is not in the fourth or fifth century, but in the age of the first apostles, that you find the spring head of Christian tradition. If you discover an opinion supported by the name of Basil or of Gregory; do not therefore infer, as a matter of course, that you have got the sense of the primitive church. These men were, in point of time, nearer to the apostles than we: still their testimony can avail only, to prove the sentiments of their own time: and it is certain, that even in their time, Christian discipline had been much depraved. The caution is still more necessary relating to Augustine: whose writings, teeming as they do, with false and pernicious novelties of scriptural

<sup>h</sup> Greg. Naz. Epist. 101. Ad Ed. 1840.] Fleury's Eccl. Hist. Cledonium. [Tom. ii. pag. 86. b. 18. c. 24.



interpretation, have been for many ages, and to a great extent still are, almost regarded as an infallible exponent of scripture. His assertions, at once dogmatical, gratuitous, and new, in a case where all that is new is false; have had the fortune to be swept together into the Book of Sentences: hence they have passed into the false and interpolated traditions of the Church of Rome: and his temerarious glosses have thus gained an establishment, at once most deeply rooted, and most destructive of the primeval faith.<sup>1</sup> I will mention one example which comes home to our present case. In the parable of the supper, we find these words: "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in."<sup>k</sup> Now this text is the basis, on which the Romanist will rest his scriptural authority for the persecution of heretics: Calvin, I suppose, must have felt some similar vindication for

<sup>1</sup> This animadversion may by some persons be thought too bold: but I have here, *in effect*, said little more than bishop Bull had said before me. In his controversy with Dr. Tully, the latter claims, as favourable to himself, all the fathers, and especially the Latin fathers, since the time of Pelagius: on which Bull's remarks are to the following tenour. "This is as far as possible from the truth. The Greek doctors, even since the time of Augustine and Pelagius, have constantly adhered to the primitive interpretation: you may find proofs of it in Theodoret, Theophylact, Œcumenius, Damascenus, and

others. The fact is, that these Greeks either were ignorant of, or did not much admire, the writings of Augustine; *that illustrious doctor, respecting whom I am constrained to acknowledge this fact, that many in the Latin churches have, by an excessive veneration for him, not only in this instance, but also in others, been led away from the general judgment of the more early fathers, [ad placita ipsius fere peculiaria amplexandum] to embrace doctrines, which are little else than the private and peculiar opinions of Augustine.*—Apol. pro Harm. Sect. ix. c. 7, page 68 of Ed. 1703.

<sup>k</sup> Luke xiv, 23.



burning Servetus. But this construction of the sacred text, rests upon the authority of Augustine: and it is, I believe, quite impossible to shew, that it ever was so interpreted before his time. But this is not all: for Augustine in this instance, will be found, if I mistake not, to contravene, not only the anterior tradition of the Church, but even his own sentiments, derived from that tradition, and avowed on other occasions by himself.<sup>1</sup> Here then, as in

<sup>1</sup> In fact, he seems to have gathered his conviction, neither from scripture, nor from any interpretation of it which had been received before his time; but to have got at it as a *discovery*, and that, by a kind of inductive process, and after the manner of an experimental philosopher. *Mea primitus sententia, says he, non erat, nisi neminem ad unitatem Christi esse cogendum, verbo esse agendum, disputatione pugnandum, ratione vincendum; ne fictos catholicos haberemus, quos apertos hæreticos noveramus. Sed hæc opinio mea, non contradicentium verbis, sed demonstrantium superabatur exemplis.* Accordingly he lays a great stress, not only upon a multitude of Donatists, who had thus practically been led to conversion; but also, upon a great variety of them, who had even expressed their gratitude for the result thus produced. [See, as cited below, his 93rd Epistle, §. 16, 17, 18.] But though Augustine did not gather his new doctrine *from* scripture: it can hardly be denied, that he

took some pains to adapt scripture to it. We have seen how he deals with the parable of the supper: that of the wheat and the tares experiences from him a similar treatment. Both interpretations are, I believe, purely *ex cogitationis* of his own, unprecedented in all earlier times; but implicitly received, and mischievously applied, in later ages.—It is rather remarkable, that my present representation seems to be supported with concurrent testimony on the part of the Theological Faculty of Paris. The change in the sentiments of Augustine, is here acknowledged by that learned body: nor is it pretended, that it sprung from any improved knowledge of either scripture or tradition. To what cause is it then attributed? *To a practical experience* [experientia duce] *of the salutary effects of persecution which had occurred to his own knowledge.* So far, you might suppose, that the case was regarded by the Paris Theologians, as a proper subject of strong reprehension: for it



other instances, he may, without injustice as I think, to his memory, be regarded as the first grand corrupter of Christian doctrine: and I suspect that his authority must have been strongly claimed, as a sanction to the fires of persecution.<sup>m</sup> But it is due also to his memory, to add, that he never contemplated the horrible extent to which his maxim was in after ages carried out: the measures of persecution which he thus vindicates, did not, I think, exceed the severity of confiscation and banishment:<sup>n</sup> the forfeiture of life, even for crimes properly cognizable by the civil power, drew from him the strongest expressions of horror and the most strenuous efforts of prevention. Lastly, it is pleasing<sup>o</sup> to contemplate the excessive absurdity of his

exhibits a mode of theologizing, which is not to be endured: but no such thing: for it is introduced in a form, by which approbation, though not expressed, is obviously implied; being employed as an authority for condemning certain propositions of Erasmus. [See the *Collectio Judiciorum de Novis Erroribus*, by D'Argentré, Tom. 2. pag. 70. Ed. 1728.]

<sup>m</sup> It can hardly be doubted of, if we consider how much his authority as to this point is followed by Aquinas, and how high the authority of this latter stands with the Roman Church. See the *Secunda Secundæ* of Aquinas, Qu. 10. Art. 8. and Qu. 11. Art. 3.

<sup>n</sup> It is thus that he expresses himself relating to the subject:

Temperata severitas, et magis mansuetudo servatur, ut coercionem *exiliorum atque damnorum*, admoneantur considerare quid, quare patiantur, &c. Epist. 93. c. 10. Ad Vincentium. [Tom. 2. pag. 234. Ed. 1679.] In fact it seems that, on Augustine's view, the *conversion* of the sinner, was the only lawful purpose of such punishments, and this would obviously forbid the infliction of death; which would render that purpose unattainable. Ne in æterni judicii poenas incidant, corrigi eos cupimus, non necari. . . . Sic igitur eorum peccata compesce, ut sint quos pœniteat peccasse. Epist. 100. Ad Donatum Proconsulem. [Tom. 2. pag. 270.]

<sup>o</sup> It is indeed equally pleasing and salutary, to view distinctly



reasonings in defence of his new doctrine : it is quite astonishing, not only that he should have thus given the law to Christian nations, but that he should even have imposed on his own understanding. As a specimen, he claims, in support of his argument, the case of St. Paul, as of a man converted by violence : but this reasoning would be ridiculous, if it was not shocking ; the infliction was that of God, who does not abdicate his own function, when he forbids *us* to usurp it.<sup>p</sup>

My present object is, to vindicate the censures of the church. I am thus desirous to separate from

the fallacies of arguments, when we find them alleged for justifying a dreadful enormity of crime. It will not therefore be wholly useless, if we examine the following pleas for the sanguinary punishment of heretics, as they were advanced by Com-mendon, a papal nuncio and afterwards cardinal, at a conference with the marquis of Brandenburg in the year 1561. We might naturally expect, from so high a functionary, the strongest defence of his cause : and we shall have the more satisfaction from finding that defence, after so long a tract of centuries since the time of Augustine, wearing the same indelible character of weakness and folly. To each plea, I will add a very short answer. I. This punishment was authorized by the laws of the empire. Ans. The law of the empire ought to be adapted to the law of Christ ; not

vice versa. II. It was conformable to the discipline of the ancient church. Ans. The nuncio does not seem to be very strong in ecclesiastical history. III. It tended to preserve the purity of religion. Ans. This is nonsense : to preserve religion by a horrible violation of it, is as if you were to kill a man in order to save his life. IV. It tended to prevent bloodshed, which heretics, if unrestrained, would perpetrate with fury. Ans. It is not lawful to punish a man for a crime, which you *take for granted* that he *will* commit. [See Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 156. c. 25.]

<sup>p</sup> See Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 23. c. 40. See also the following passages of Augustine : Contra Gaudentium, lib. i. c. 28. [Opera Tom. 9. pag. 649.] Epist. 185. cc. 19, 22, 24. [Opera Tom. 2. pag. 650.]



the due and rightful effects of an excommunication, not only those which have been falsely *ascribed* to it; but those also, which, through human weakness or wickedness, have *in fact* been connected with it. I have accordingly stated the general principles, on which, as on a basis, the follies and crimes of succeeding ages were superstructed. We have seen, that these principles do themselves rest upon no valid foundation. We will now proceed, to take a selected view of some of the consequences, which have, in practice, resulted from them.

Among these, I will first mention the forfeiture, thereby incurred by kings, of their crown and their dominions. The earliest example may seem to be that of Henry IV. king of Germany, in the year 1076: I speak thus cautiously, because the papal pretension does not yet appear to be distinctly asserted: but the instance before us is one, in which it seems to be implied: for the judgments of anathema and of dethronement are simultaneously pronounced. This, on the view of the abbé Fleury, may be thought to have been grounded on the strained construction, which I have above described, of scriptural precepts. The reasoning, in defence of this usurpation, is supposed by this writer to have been framed in the following manner, by pope Gregory VII, better known perhaps by the name of Hildebrand: by whom, as a papal prerogative, this power was first assumed. "We are bound to shun the excommunicated, to have no intercourse with them, not to speak to them, not even, according to the apostle, to wish them God



speed. A prince, thus situated, ought to be abandoned by every human creature : it is no longer lawful to obey him, to receive his orders, nor to come near him : he is an outcast from the pale of Christian society."<sup>a</sup> Now it is obvious, that the function of a king can, under this privation of intercourse, no longer exist. The menace of deposal was by the same pope, in the case of Philip I, king of France, enforced by a general anathema upon all his subjects who might yield him obedience : these subjects, according to the sentiments of the age, being thus obliged to renounce either their allegiance or their salvation.<sup>r</sup> This occurs in the year 1073 : it involves however only a menace, not a judgment. But the papal power of deposing was carried out to a further extent : for it is not pretended, that Hildebrand was the first, who had reasoned thus. It was however reserved to him, to strengthen the power thus arrogated, by introducing new principles, resting on inferential deduction ; principles which seem, on his part, to have been quite peculiar and original, but which experienced little resistance during subsequent ages. The argument stood thus : If the church be supreme in the higher jurisdiction of spiritual matters, with much more reason must we admit her supremacy in the lower jurisdiction over those which are temporal ? And again : If the church can judge a bishop, how much more a king, who is far inferior to him ?<sup>b</sup> It

<sup>a</sup> Eccl. Hist. c. 18. of the Discourse prefixed to vol. 13.

<sup>r</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 62. c. 6.

<sup>b</sup> See the Discourse of Fleury, as cited above. See also especially, the Eccl. Hist. b. 62, c. 32. On a letter, which is here referred to,



was only natural to deduce from hence a claim, which would depress the regal authority into a total dependence on the See of Rome.

It is not to be supposed that Hildebrand, however he may have strained a maxim to the aggrandizement of his own power, was the first who adopted this illegitimate construction of an anathema. The earliest practical approach to it, has been already fixed to about the middle of the fifth century: I refer to the case of Eutyches. And a more distinct enunciation of the principle, considered as a law, may perhaps be found in the ninth canon of the Council of Vernon, held in the year 755: it may however be thought that the language is ambiguous.<sup>t</sup> These proceedings were independent of all papal authority. It may also be seen that, in another instance, equally separate from Roman interposition, we find, on the part of a king, an unequivocal recognition of an ecclesiastical power of dethronement. This occurs in the year 859, at the council of Savonnières: where Charles the Bald presents a memorial, in which, speaking of Venilon, archbishop of Sens, he addresses to this

of Greg. VII, Fleury has these words: On y voit les fondemens de cette doctrine, *novie jusques alors*, que le pape eut droit de deposer les souverains.

<sup>t</sup> The words might seem to forbid *the intercourse of speech*; *nec in oratione se jungere*. Fleury however renders it, aucun ne doit prier avec lui. See Labbe's Concilia, Tom. 6, page 1667; and Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 43. c. 23.

The whole passage runs thus: Et ut sciatis, qualis sit modus istius excommunicationis; in ecclesiam non debet intrare, nec cum ullo Christiano cibum vel potum sumere, nec eujs munera quisquam accipere debet, vel osculum porrigere, nec in oratione se jungere, nec salutare, antequam ab episcopo suo fuerit reconciliatus.



effect the prelates of the assembly: "He performed the ceremony of my coronation: on which occasion he made me a promise, that he would not, at least without the consent of the bishops then assisting at the ceremony, depose me from my royal dignity: to their judgment I then professed submission, and I now renew the profession."<sup>u</sup> This remarkable incident may justify a conjecture as to another cause, which may, in part at least, have given rise to this usurpation over the rights of princes. Fleury speaks of it to the following effect. "The ceremony of coronation, which had been introduced after the middle of the eighth century, served as an additional pretext for the assumption of this power:<sup>x</sup> the bishops, when they placed the crown on the head of the sovereign, had, in conferring the royal dignity, the semblance of acting as the deputies of God."<sup>y</sup> But to return to the subject of excommunication: in process of time, the power of it was maintained to belong inherently to the pope only, and to other bishops only as a delegated function.<sup>z</sup> The pretension to this superiority,

<sup>u</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 49. c. 46.

<sup>x</sup> The following words are taken from the ritual, used at the coronation of Charles I, and may perhaps be considered as a faint vestige of a more ancient doctrine.

"Stand, and hold fast from henceforth the place, to which you have been heir by the succession of your forefathers, being now delivered to you by the authority of

Almighty God, and *by the hands of us, and all the bishops*, and servants of God." Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol 2. page 735. ed. 1714.

<sup>y</sup> Disc. prefixed to the 13th vol. of the Eccl. Hist. c. 10.

<sup>z</sup> "Le pape seul peut excommuniquer, parceque lui seul peut separer de la communion de tous les fideles: les eveques ne le peuvent que par la jurisdiction qu' il leur a communiquée et determi-



may seem to have been as ancient as the eighth century: for it appears that about the year 796, (which is, as far as I am aware, the earliest indication of it,) Athelard, archbishop of Canterbury, was commissioned by the pope for the exercise of this authority.<sup>a</sup> It will readily be seen, that this doctrine, concurrently with other influences of present consideration, would subjugate all Christian nations to the Roman see.

To revert to that false maxim, which exaggerated and perverted the duty of separation from the excommunicated. We have contemplated, from history, its evil and pernicious tendency: and we may, in order to the further exposure of it, draw from the same source, a very instructive notice. To this maxim we find, about the year 870, an energetic resistance on the part of Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims. He seizes the true ground of refutation, by appealing to a long tract of ages, which had passed away before this maxim appeared: he urges in effect, against Pope Adrian II, that a papal injunction, such as he had received, was unknown to his predecessors; that the holiest bishops had never scrupled, when needful, to hold conference of speech with wicked and heretical princes, such as Constantius, Julian, and the tyrant Maximus; and that the transfer of monarchy was, in the present constitution of the world, a result of war and of conquest, but no part of any legi-

née.' This, as stated by Fleury, the treatise: the author died in 1328.  
is the doctrine of Augustine Tri-  
onfe. See the Eccl. Hist. b. 93. <sup>a</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 45. c.  
c. 43. I do not find the date of 6.



timate effect, derivable from the anathema of a bishop.<sup>b</sup>

About the year 998, there occurs, in the case of Robert king of France, an instance truly deserving of remark. For the abuse of excommunication seems, at this conjuncture, through progressive steps, to be fast approaching towards the summit of its climax: and the event is the more remarkable from the date of it, which brings us near to the time of the notorious Hildebrand. In this instance, the monarch, though otherwise abandoned by every human creature, still retains, for the sustentation of life, the attendance of two domestics; by whom, however, were thrown into the fire, all vessels, which had been employed for the ministration of his food. Still, however, this example does not go the full length of a *total* exclusion from Christian intercourse: nor does it involve any pretence for the forfeiture of a crown.<sup>c</sup> It may be important to add, that the present case seems to wear the character of a *papal* excommunication, rather than otherwise.<sup>d</sup>

In order to the overthrow of this maxim, I am, if I mistake not, entitled to claim the authority of the Roman See itself: that authority, I think, will convey an admission, that such maxim

<sup>b</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 52. cc. 1, 8.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid. b. 57. c. 57.

<sup>d</sup> The denunciation of anathema is pronounced in a council held at Rome by Gregory V; in which council, though other bishops are concurrent with the

pope, yet it does not appear to me, that any of them, except he, had even a *false* pretension to canonical authority for the act. See Labbe's Concilia, Tom. 9. pag. 772: especially the annotation of Sirmond.



was no requirement of the Divine law. For if it were, it could not be subject to relaxation by any *human* law: and yet it appears, that it was thus relaxed, and that to a great extent, even by Hildebrand himself; who seems, from witnessing the dreadful effects of his own principles, to have been constrained to relinquish them.<sup>e</sup> In later ages, we find the rigour of the Roman doctrine again softened in the Council of Basle, and in the Concordate between the king of France and Pope Leo X.<sup>f</sup> And it deserves our remark, that although, in the Church of England, we are, conformably to primitive discipline, required to shun the converse of the excommunicated; yet the case admits not a reasonable doubt respecting the purpose of our reformers, namely, that this obligation should be strongly limited and restrained.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>e</sup> See the Decretum of Gratian, Causa 11. Quæst, 3. c. 103. These words from his Epistles (ix. 9.) are also remarkable. De causa videlicet excommunicatorum super qua consulisti, nihil tibi, præter quod sacri canones præcipiunt, respondere possumus: scilicet ut abstinenceis vos a communione ipsorum, prout Deus concesserit, et vestra prudentia poterit. [Harduin's Concilia, page 1486 of Tom. 6.]

<sup>f</sup> Fleury's Droit Ecclesiastique, Part iii. c. 20. [Page 188, of vol. 2. Ed. 1767.]

<sup>g</sup> Cum excommunicato non resipiscente nec in Domini mensa scienter communicandum est, nec in ullis cum illo divinis officiis

versandum. Atque ista quidem poena nullam exceptionem habeat. Deinde ne cibum quidem aut potum una cum illo capere, vel oseulari, vel salutare, vel ad ædes tuas invitare fas erit. In quo tamen debet indulgeri: nam reus licet in ædes alienas commeari non debet, tamen propria ejus domus solitaria non relinquatur, nec a pactis civilibus excludetur et usitatis negotiis quibus necessariae res humanæ vitæ suppeditantur: et si quis illum admonendi causa visitaverit et ad probitatem reflectendi, non debet in officio tam pio impediri. Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum, Tit. de Excommunicatione, c. 10. [page 163, Ed. 1641.]



It is now time to inquire into the temporal pains and penalties of the excommunicated. How could these cruel inflictions become connected with the doctrine of a teacher, whose kingdom was not of this world, and whose precepts of universal love are at once without parallel and without limit, susceptible of no restriction from malice or from guilt? How was it possible, to amalgamate in practice, things which are, in nature, utterly repugnant? The profession of evangelical charity on the one hand, and the fires of persecution on the other, are things incapable of coalition: how was it possible to blend them? In physical bodies, where there is no affinity, there can be no combination. The case may well exemplify a saying of our great moralist: "Inconsistencies cannot both be right, but, imputed to man, they may both be true."<sup>b</sup> Here is a phenomenon which requires to be explained: it is impossible that my subject can obtain an adequate defence, till these inhuman crimes are disconnected from it.

However awful is the true and scriptural import of an excommunication; yet this infliction had, in the ninth century,<sup>i</sup> sunk into general contempt. This is said to have been chiefly occasioned by its frequency: other abuses may have contributed to this result: and the growth of irreligion may have had much influence: for it is obvious, that in a mind void of religion, the terrour of an excommunication cannot exist. To rouse the dormant feeling; seems to have been the object of new cir-

<sup>b</sup> Dr. Johnson, *Rasselas*, c. 8. the Disc. prefixed to vol. 13. See

<sup>i</sup> Fleury's *Eccl. Hist.* c. 17, of also b. 53, c. 37.



cumstances in the administration of this judgment. Thus, the more ancient formulary of the anathema, was modified and rendered more terrible, by inserting the names of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and Judas Iscariot, together with a portion of the 109th psalm: that portion being recited, in the form of imprecation on the head of the sinner.<sup>k</sup> With a like intent, as we may suppose, was introduced the ceremonial of the bell, book, and candle: of which ceremonial, the following is the best explanation I can give. The bell, as I conceive, might be sounded to collect the people, whether for warning or publicity: the book I conjecture to have been the Bible, or some other ecclesiastical book; and I think it may not improbably have been used, for the recitation, of which I have just spoken: as for the candle, we are less in doubt; by this are denoted lighted flambeaux, extinguished with a malediction, which was horrible in itself, and rendered more expressive, by a reference of similitude to the darkness then created.<sup>l</sup> Such proceedings might at first call forth emotions of wonder and dismay: but after a time they became familiar, and excommunications were regarded with obstinate contempt. To such contempt, the *true* antidote would have been provided, by proper efforts to revive the sense of religion: that *actually employed*, was, to strengthen the coercion of the church by an unchristian alliance with the secular power; thus procuring the

\* See note (2) at page 184 of 185. See also c. 17. of the Discourse prefixed to the 13th vol. of vol ii. of Fleury's Institution au Droit Ecclesiastique, Ed. 1767. his Ecclesiastical History.

<sup>l</sup> See Fleury, as above, page



infliction of pains and penalties on the body, or on the estate, of the excommunicated. The councils of Verona in the year 1184, and of Narbonne in the year 1227; may be referred to with advantage for the illustration of this subject.

Here it occurs as a difficulty, to imagine, how this could be thought to agree with the law of Christianity. From what we have seen, indeed, relating to Hildebrand; it is plain, that no plea could avail against *his* views of the plenitude of his power. Still, however, it might justly be thought, that this was no proper mode of exercising it: nor am I aware, that he ever attempted to push it to this extent. But we are to remember the allegory of the two swords: I have already had occasion to explain it.<sup>m</sup> This allegory, it may be thought, would be full to the point. Still, however, it might seem, that all this was not enough to justify the sanguinary punishment of a misbeliever. The voice of Christian authority, in the primitive ages, would have been raised with loud abhorrence, and with extreme severity of condemnation, against any such flagitious wrong: even down to the ninth century,<sup>n</sup>

<sup>m</sup> See page 230 of this treatise. to the present subject. [Eccl.

<sup>n</sup> The patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople and Remy, archbishop of Lyons, may serve respectively to testify for both the Greek and Latin churches. See the narratives of the abbé Fleury, relating to the persecution of the Manicheans by the emperor Michael, in the year 811; and to the punishment of Goteschalchus in 850: both the cases have a very striking and pointed application

Hist. b. 45. c. 54. and b. 49. c. 5.] In the year 815, we have an instance of a pope being rebuked by an emperor, for punishing with death a conspiracy against his own life. The pope, in this case, is Leo III.; the emperor is Louis le Debonnaire. This last case is, indeed, *unconnected with heresy*: but it is not quite irrelevant to the matters comprised in this chapter.



the primeval sentiment seems to have been still powerful and efficacious: and it may well be thought, that in *every* age, the question would still force itself upon the conscience, and cling there with steadfast pertinacity: How can you reconcile your cruelty with the precepts of your religion? But there was a canon of the Council of Antioch, held in the year 341: of which council, the canons had subsequently been incorporated in the Code of the Universal Church. By this canon it was ordained, respecting certain schismatical priests, that *they should be delivered over to the secular arm*; an ordinance which was, in truth, nothing to the purpose. But in the eleventh century it was thus reasoned upon by Anselm of Lucca: If this rule apply to schismatical clergymen, much more forcibly must it apply to other men, who are more wicked than they.<sup>o</sup> We have reason to suppose, that Anselm was innocent and unsuspecting of the mode, in which his new doctrine would soon be carried out: such however seems to have been the basis, both for introducing, and for vindicating, the most atrocious and cruel acts of ecclesiastical procedure. It may be remarked, that the author of this fallacy died in the year 1086; and that there occurs, after a short interval, at the Council of Toulouse, held by pope

<sup>o</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 63. c. 29. This author's reflection on the present case is well entitled to our attentive consideration. "Mais il faut remarquer, que ce cinquieme canon d'Antioche ne parle que d'un pretre qui fait schisme avec son eveque, et qui passe jusques a exciter une sedition dans la ville: ce qui met l'eglise *dans la necessite* d'avoir recours au magistrat: d'ou il ne s'ensuit pas, qu'elle soit en droit d'employer l'autorite temporelle contre toutes sortes de pecheurs," &c.



Callistus II. in 1119, the earliest ecclesiastical ordinance for *repressing heretics by the secular power*.<sup>p</sup> The very form of language, thus introduced, seems to imply a confession, that *the Church has no power of temporal punishment*.

The case is so important, that it merits to be more distinctly unfolded. We are first to look back upon the earlier and better times of the Church: far from procuring, either directly or indirectly, the death of a misbeliever, it was the general characteristic of those times, to stay the course of human justice by strong deprecations, and to implore mercy for crimes, which were properly amenable to the civil power: and this, even in favour of heretics, pagans, and persecutors of the Church. In evidence of this position, I can only refer, in general, to ecclesiastical records: but I will, for illustration, select one impressive example. The case is that of Augustine, in a letter addressed to the proconsul of Africa, as administrator of the imperial laws against the Donatists. In this letter, he earnestly entreats the proconsul, that the lives of those sectarians, however enormous their offences, should, under any circumstances, be spared: setting forth, that the catholics, if their complaints were to bring down the infliction of death, would be deprived of protection from the state; for that they never could claim that protection, on a view of the consequence; and that they would thus, in the issue, be left entirely at the mercy of their enemies, when it was seen, that they would rather

<sup>p</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 67. c. 2.



suffer death with patience, than be the cause of it to other men. So ardent was this charity, that it was not to be extinguished by the most cruel, depraved, and injurious wrongs, such as bodily mutilation, murder, and even burning alive.<sup>a</sup> And now, with respect to the Antiochene canon: what was the purpose of it? Not, as I conceive, that of handing over the schismatical priest, in the form of indictment, to the civil power; but that of precluding him from the benefit of this merciful intercession. But in whatever light you view it; whether as forbidding an interposition of charity, or as decreeing a forensic process: it was not, as Anselm seems to suppose, the magnitude of the guilt, but the specific exigency of the case, which formed the ground and reason of the ordinance: the crime, as it is ostensibly named, is that of riotous sedition, over which the Church had no coactive power, but which obviously lies within the province of the civil magistrate: it was of such a nature, that either the crime must be suppressed, or the Christian worship discontinued: it was a case, in which an ecclesiastical judgment could have been of no avail, inasmuch as it evinced a stubborn and rebellious contempt for ecclesiastical authority.

This canon involves a very important point. It will therefore be far from undesirable, that I should give, as I will proceed to do, a distinct view of it:

<sup>a</sup> For a fuller representation of this matter, the reader is particularly referred to the abbé Fleury, See the 14th chapter of the Discourse prefixed to 16th vol. of his Ecclesiastical History.



to which I will also annex, my own apprehension of its purport and meaning.

Εἰ τις πρεσβυτερος, ἡ διακονος, καταφρονήσας τοῦ ἐπισκοποῦ τοῦ ἰδίου, ἀφώρισεν ἑαυτὸν τῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ ἰδίᾳ συνήγαγε, καὶ θυσιαστηρίον ἐπηξέ, καὶ τοῦ ἐπισκοποῦ προσκαλεσαμένου ἀπειθοίη, καὶ μὴ βουλοίτο αὐτῷ πειθεσθαι, μῆδε ὑπακούει καὶ πρῶτον καὶ δευτέρον καλοῦντι· τούτον καθαιρεῖσθαι παντελῶς, καὶ μηκέτι θεραπείας τυγχάνειν, μῆτε δυνασθαι λαμβάνειν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ τιμὴν. Εἰ δὲ παραμένει, θορυβῶν, καὶ ἀναστατῶν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν· δια τῆς ἐξωθεν ἐξουσίας ὥς στασιωδὴ αὐτὸν ἐπιστρεφείσθαι.\*

If any priest or deacon, setting at nought the authority of his own bishop, hath separated himself from the Church, and formed a private conventicle, and erected an altar; and if, when summoned by his bishop, he shall be contumacious, and shall, after a first and a second citation, refuse to obey and to submit: it is decreed, that he, so offending, shall be entirely deposed; that he shall never again exercise a ministerial function; and that he shall not be able to recover his clerical rank. And if he shall persist, AND SHALL DISTURB WITH NOISE AND TUMULT, AND BREAK UP, THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE CATHOLIC CONGREGATION: [it shall be permitted] that he shall, in this case, be punished FOR SEDITION by the secular power.<sup>a</sup>

\* Beveregii Synodicon, Tom. 1. [page 436. Ed. 1672.]

<sup>a</sup> That is, as I conceive: *no effort shall be made to prevent it.* That the Council should *dictate* to the civil power, an infliction of punishment, is an absurdity. But should it be thought, that an appeal to the civil power is hereby *commanded*: this single and solitary instance affords a strong presumption, that such appeals were contrary to the general practice of the Church: otherwise, why should there be a

special canon to require, or to sanction, such appeal, in regard to one particular offence? Why should a synodical ordinance be required, to direct, or to entitle, a man, to claim protection from the laws of his country? unless it be, that it was more accordant with the sentiment and the practice of Christians, to forego that claim than to assert it. It is not quite immaterial to say a word respecting the penalty thus incurred, as a rioter, by the schismatical priest: it was, I believe,



As for the doctrine, thus seemingly engrafted on this canon, though it was new, as well as atrocious: yet it was not, in an age of excessive ignorance, difficult to procure for it the character and credit of a primeval truth.

A great departure from the anterior regimen of the Church, seems to me to have resulted, from the influence of the emperor Charlemagne and of his preceptor Alcuinus. It seems to me also, that the reign of theological ignorance would thus be greatly favoured. If I am careful in pronouncing upon causes, I may at least speak with more confidence relating to time: the change was certainly coe-

much the same with what we should denote by the term, *transportation for life*. [See Cujacii Opera, Tom. 1. pag. 311. Ed. 1637. See also Facciolati's Lexicon, on the words *Deportatus* and *Relegatus*.] If the punishment of death had been applicable to the case; it would be repugnant to the general character of primitive Christianity, to imagine, that the Council of Antioch would ever have sanctioned an appeal to the secular power. Before I quit the subject, I will just notice, that there are, in the Fathers, two memorable passages, the tendency of which is to restrain within its due limits, the construction of this Antiochene canon; and especially, to restrain it from that exorbitant latitude, which would claim therefrom a licence for enforcing ecclesiastical

censures by temporal punishments. The passages occur in the 9th chapter of the second book of Theodoret's Ecclesiastical History, and in the 4th chapter of the second book of Chrysostome de Sacerdotio: they are reserved for the Supplementary Remarks: meanwhile, I will briefly represent the nature of the inference I claim from them. If the canon, now under consideration, was ever, and any where, rightly understood and acted upon; we might rationally suppose, that this would be at Antioch itself, and a few years after it was promulgated: I say then, that these passages afford strong evidence, that it was not, *then and there*, construed according to that interpretation, which I now resist and deny.



taneous with the lives of those eminent men.<sup>t</sup> The dark dominion, when firmly established, might naturally prepare mankind for a rapid introduction of supposititious and false traditions : and this may account for the strange and dreadful phenomenon, that a maxim of cruelty should ever be numbered among the doctrines of the Gospel. In the twelfth century, for example, Gratian, with no better authority, as it seems, than his own head, propounded this doctrine ; namely, That the pope is not subject to the canons of the Church. Now this tenet was received with a general acquiescence of three centuries, and obtained a strong position among the traditions of the Church.<sup>u</sup> It may serve to exemplify the fecundity of error, and to verify that scholastic maxim : *Uno absurdo dato, sequentur mille.*<sup>x</sup> For it will, of itself, go far to account for a variety of horrible abuses. Thus, if you cancel this usurped and unrighteous pretension ; the pope could not excommunicate Queen Elizabeth : because he has not, by the canons, any such power beyond the diocese of Rome.<sup>y</sup> Again : he could not put any territory under an interdict : for this might involve an excommunication of many millions :

<sup>t</sup> It was at this time that the False Decretals first emerged. pretensions would have been at once detected.

The imposture was, I think, never fully exposed till the time of Erasmus. It is at once obvious, how much the darkness of succeeding ages would be augmented, by the reception of this document : had it not been for the ignorance of the age in which it first appeared, it is probable, that its

<sup>u</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 70. c. 28. See also c. 6. of the Discourse prefixed to the 16th volume.

<sup>x</sup> That is : There is no end of absurdities, which follow from the admission of *one*.

<sup>y</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 47. c. 38. and more particularly b. 58. c. 16.



whereas the canons, if I mistake not, will not allow any judgment of excommunication to pass, without a hearing of the cause.<sup>z</sup> In other cases, he would be prevented from taking the law into his own hands, in matters of international dispute with foreign princes: for a canon of the Church, even as it had been laid down by pope Gregory the Great, forbids a bishop to excommunicate on account of a grievance personal to himself.<sup>a</sup> To mention only one more instance: the dreadful tribunal of the Inquisition could thus never have been erected: for the canons of the Church punished not secret crimes, but only such as were open.<sup>b</sup> Much of this arose, as I conceive, from an ignorance of ecclesiastical antiquity: and this ignorance seems to me to have been fomented, by a strong tincture of secularity, imparted by Alcuinus to the studies of clergymen. It appears from the abbé Fleury,<sup>c</sup> as an effect of such ignorance, that even by Thomas Aquinas, a

<sup>a</sup> See the Decretum of Gratian, Causa ii. Qu. 1. cc. 11 and 13.

<sup>a</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 35. c. 37.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. b. 22. c. 4. If it be objected, that my reference to the canons, in these several foregoing cases, is too indefinite, and unaccompanied by a formal citation: I must answer, that all these cases involve unauthorized violations of the primitive discipline, and that, as it has been truly affirmed, the Church, as well as the state, has its Unwritten Law. To justify myself

more specifically, for speaking of these cases as violations of the *Canons*: I would not only allege the passages, above referred to, of Fleury's History; but would also claim the authority of a general principle, thus laid down by him in relation to this subject: Quand les anciens parlent d'observer les canons, il ne faut pas nous imaginer, qu'ils ne parlent que de ceux qui etaient *ecrits*: ils parlent de tout ce qui se pratiquait par une tradition constante. Chap. 10. of the Discourse prefixed to vol. 8.

<sup>c</sup> Mœurs des Chrétiens, c. 64.



practice of about a century old, is estimated as a thing essential to the Gospel. We need not wonder at it: for we find, with more particular relation to the point in hand, that the Angelic Doctor has ascribed, even to the burning of heretics, the same antiquity and authority:<sup>d</sup> although the first introduction of this villany was, in his time, a thing of yesterday. Let me then entreat every honest mind to guard itself, against confusing the true idea of Ecclesiastical Tradition. The Son of Sirach counsels wisely, when he says: "Miss not the discourse of the elders: for they also learned of their fathers."<sup>e</sup> But we must, in the use of this precept, beware that we embrace not, as a tradition of the Church, *every* thing that has come from our fathers. It is not *therefore* a valid tradition, because it has come down from Augustin to Lombard, and from Lombard to Aquinas; or because it has been transmitted from the eleventh century to the thirteenth, or from the council of Florence to the council of Trent. To substantiate this character, there must be nothing less than a manifest and well proved derivation *from the apostles*. It is sufficient to prove a doctrine untrue, if we can prove, that it begins at a later time. On this view, it is of no avail, agreeably to Chillingworth, to plead the authority of the fifth, the fourth, the third, or even the second century. "Not any antiquity," says he, "unless it be absolute and primitive, is a certain sign of true doctrine."<sup>f</sup> And again:

<sup>d</sup> See the third and fourth Articles of Quæst. xi of the Secunda Secundæ.

<sup>e</sup> Ecclus. viii. 9.

<sup>f</sup> Religion of Protestants, ch. 5. §. 91.



“Though novelty be a certain note of falsehood, yet no antiquity less than apostolical, is a certain note of truth.”<sup>g</sup> The abbé Fleury speaks much to the same effect:<sup>h</sup> and my reader may perhaps better appreciate this golden axiom of theology, by finding it thus strenuously asserted, by two such eminent names in the separated communions of England and Rome. Let us try, by this criterion, that doctrine, which justifies the sanguinary punishment of heretics. While we thus find, on the one hand, that this tradition did *not* come from the apostles: we shall also find, if I mistake not, from what source it did come; namely, from an infidel emperor and persecutor of the Christian faith.

During the paganism of the Roman empire, and about the year 269, a law had been made against the Manicheans: in which, by reason of their supposed similarity to the Oriental Magicians,<sup>i</sup> they were involved in the same condemnation. Of this law, Dioclesian was the author: the effect of it was, to impose in some cases the penalty of death, and in others, of death by burning. Even after the empire had become Christian, this law against the Manicheans seems to have undergone little or

<sup>g</sup> Ibid, ch. 5. §. 98.

<sup>h</sup> See the note at page 230 of this treatise.

<sup>i</sup> From the concurrent accounts of Epiphanius and Diogenes Laertius, the Manichean system seems to have been partly derived from the Persian Magi. See Epiph. Hær. 66. c. 88, and Diog. Laert. in Præmio. It seems to

have been the policy of this sect to protect themselves from hatred, by assuming the names of other sects. See Fleury, Eccl. Hist. b. 18. c. 9. Even the general name of *Christian* seems at first to have been employed as a disguise of this character. See page 145 of this treatise.



no mitigation.<sup>k</sup> Thus it had, in part at least, been renewed, by Theodosius the Great, in the year 382;<sup>l</sup> by the emperors Theodosius and Valentinian in 428;<sup>m</sup> and by the emperor Justin about the year 523.<sup>n</sup> In the year 811, the emperor Michael decreed the penalty of death against the Manicheans, and was proceeding with the infliction of it, when he was restrained by the merciful exposition of the patriarch Nicephorus.<sup>o</sup> About the year 844, the administration of the empress Theodora is marked, by a dreadful massacre of these sectarians, to the number of about a hundred thousand persons.<sup>p</sup> But every one of these transactions seems to wear a secular aspect, and to be remote from all ecclesiastical character. Now the laws of the Romans had, through the introduction of Charlemagne, passed into the monarchy of France:<sup>q</sup> and the earliest well defined record, of heretics being adjudged to the flames, is that of the Manicheans of Orleans in the year 1022. But this judgment was not that of the Church, but of the king: nor have we reason to look upon it as a judgment upon opinions, but upon overt actions, and those most nefarious, in which even murder was aggravated by frightful circumstances: there was not, for

<sup>k</sup> Les empereurs Chrétiens ont depuis suivi ces loix contre les Manichéens. Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 8. c. 25.

<sup>l</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 18. c. 9.

<sup>m</sup> See the Codex of Justinian, book i. tit. 5. §. 5.

<sup>n</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 31. c. 59.

<sup>o</sup> Ibid. b. 45. c. 54.

<sup>p</sup> Ibid. b. 48. c. 25.

<sup>q</sup> Charlemagne avait eu soin de repandre par tous ses états, . . . la loi Romaine, et les autres loix de tous les peuples de son obéissance. Fleury's Traité des Etudes, c. 5. See also cc. 7 and 11 of the same work.



the dreadful infliction, any pretence of an ecclesiastical law; nor even a plea of canonical rule, for handing over to the secular arm. But there is another incident, which may help to shew, how little the minds of men, even at this time, were prepared for contemplating, in an excruciating death, any due effect, or proper adjunct, of a spiritual censure: for we find, nearly a century later, and in France also, another proceeding against certain Manicheans; in which instance, the punishment of the flames is inflicted by the fury of the populace, in *resistance* of the ecclesiastical power, and from a fear, that the merciful disposition of the clergy would rescue the victims. This latter event occurs in connexion with the Council of Beauvais, which was held in the year 1114.<sup>r</sup>

Here then I would distinctly note what I consider to be, the effects of a blundering tradition. The penalty of flagitious crimes, comes to be viewed as the appropriate penalty of heretics: this confusion seems to have arisen from the facts, first, that the culprits at Orleans *were* heretics; and secondly, that the examination of their case, as one of a mixed nature, partly ecclesiastical and partly secular, was conducted in the presence, not only of the king, as judge of criminal offences, but also of bishops, as judges of heresy: though these bishops do not appear, in any particular, to have departed from the merciful character of their holy function. It will aid the supposition, if we consider, what I believe to be the fact, that

<sup>r</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 66. c. 29.



all the earlier sanguinary punishments of heretics, are confined to the Manicheans : whom I consider to have thus suffered, not for their opinions, but for their crimes : while it was natural enough, under the ignorance which I have depicted, that the two ideas should become confused and indistinct. Again, I would contend, with respect to the cruel peculiarity of this punishment, that it may well be explained on the supposition of a *pagan* original : but how it could have originated in any notions of Christianity, even an infidel might be perplexed to understand. Lastly, it deserves to be considered, that when, in the twelfth century, the doctrine relating to heretics had ripened into its full maturity of wickedness ; the ecclesiastical procedure was, in the form of handing over the heretic to the secular power : and the Roman law, of which I have spoken, is, as I think most probable, the law by which the Manichean, thus falling under secular cognizance, would, in the natural course of things, be judged ; the secular power having no other rule of jurisdiction. In times, when the traditions of the Church stood upon no basis but the ignorance of the clergy ; it was no unnatural transition, that the punishment of crimes connected with heresy, should come to be considered as the rightful punishment of heresy itself. It is thus that I would unfold the origin, of the most dreadful of all those enormities, the reproach of which has been unjustly thrown upon the censures of the Church.

These representations may serve to shew generally, respecting all the abuses of excommunication ;



that they are no part of Christianity: a truth made the more evident, from investigating, as we have done, the time and the causes, from which they really sprung. The time was a time, at which Christian truth could not originate: and the causes are marked, by the strongest and most hateful repugnancy to the maxims of the Gospel.

If this be the true state of the case, how strong is the necessity for putting it forth! Let it be considered, that in the fourteenth century, it is set forth as a false, if not an heretical, doctrine, that no man ought to be excommunicated except from a motive of charity, and in order to the salvation of his soul.<sup>a</sup> Let it be considered, that in the sixteenth century, both Luther and Erasmus are, in two several judgments, condemned by the theological faculty of Paris, for denying the lawfulness of burning heretics. Let it be considered, that even so late as the year 1676, this atrocity was never put down by the law of England. Let it be considered, that the day has not yet come, in which religious persecution is left without an advocate: the day has not yet come, in which there are no professing Christians, whom it is necessary to teach, that a heretic is, by the law of Christ, entitled to every strong regard of mercy and charity, to his body and estate, as well as to his soul. Now if, on other grounds, it be desirable that these matters be duly represented; there is a special and an urgent reason for it in the present case: for if it be shewn, respecting all the various abuses of excommunication, that they are no part of Chris-

<sup>a</sup> Collier's Eccl. Hist. vol. i. page 576. Ed. 1708.



tianity: it must follow, that they furnish no ground of accusation against the subject matter of this vindication.

Lastly, if it be necessary as a part of this subject, to separate the true from the false doctrine; that necessity will be more apparent, and the distinction more palpable, if I subjoin the following document: it discovers to us a form of excommunication, at which even a Turk or an infidel well might shudder, and which was in use previously to the Reformation. If I do not animadvert upon its blasphemy and superstition: be it remembered, that these points belong not to my present purpose.

“By the command of the Father, the Son, and  
 “the Holy Ghost; of the Blessed Mary, Mother of  
 “our Lord Jesus Christ; of St. Michael, John the  
 “Baptist, and Peter and Paul Princes of the Apostles;  
 “of St. Stephen and all the Martyrs; St. Sylvester  
 “and all the Confessors; St. Aldegonde and all the  
 “Holy Virgins; and all the other Saints whatsoever,  
 “both in heaven and upon earth: We curse and cut  
 “off from holy Mother-Church those, who [have  
 “done such or such a thing,] or knew of it, or ad-  
 “vised it, or had a hand in it. Let them be cursed  
 “in their houses, their beds, their fields, their lands,  
 “and their ways, and in towns and villages. Let them  
 “be cursed in woods, rivers, and churches: cursed in  
 “their law-suits and in their quarrels: cursed in their  
 “prayers, in speaking and being silent; in eating,  
 “drinking and sleeping; in watching, walking, stand-  
 “ing, running, resting and riding: cursed in hearing,  
 “seeing and tasting: cursed in all their actions. Let



“this curse strike their heads, their eyes, and their  
 “whole body from the crown of the head to the sole  
 “of the feet. I adjure thee, Satan, and all thy  
 “agents, by the Father, the Son, and the Holy  
 “Ghost, to have no rest neither in the day, nor in  
 “the night, till you have brought a temporal and  
 “eternal confusion upon them, by contriving the  
 “matter so, that they be drowned, or hanged, or  
 “devoured by wild beasts, or torn by vultures or  
 “eagles, or consumed by fire, or killed by their  
 “enemies. Make them odious to all living creatures.  
 “Let their children be fatherless, and their wives,  
 “widows. Let nobody for the time to come help  
 “them, or take pity on their fatherless children. And  
 “as *Lucifer* was expelled from Heaven, and Adam  
 “banished from Paradise ; let them be likewise ex-  
 “pelled and banished from this world, being deprived  
 “of their estates ; and let them be buried with the  
 “burial of an ass. Let them be partakers of the  
 “punishment of *Corah, Dathan, and Abiram*, of  
 “*Judas*, and *Pontius Pilate*, and of all those, who  
 “say to the Lord their God : *Get thee gone : we will*  
 “*have no knowledge of thy paths.*” It is added by  
 the historian from whom I derive this formula :  
 “Afterwards, he who pronounced those imprecations,  
 put out two lighted candles, which he held in his  
 hands, and added these dreadful words : “I adjure  
 “thee, Satan, and all thy agents, to extinguish the  
 “light of their eyes, as these candles are extin-  
 “guished, unless they repent, and make full sa-  
 “tisfaction. *Amen.* Let it be so. *Amen.*”<sup>t</sup>

<sup>t</sup> Abridgment of Brandt's Hist. Countries, vol. i. page 6. [Ed.  
 of the Reformation in the Low Lond. 1725.]



It will, I trust, be readily admitted, how needful it was to go into these details. I am compelled, by the nature of my treatise, to vindicate the power of excommunication: and I thus claim for it, as an essential part of Christianity, a character quite conformable to the charity of our religion. But this character, in a case so liable to misapprehension, it would be impossible to substantiate, if I were to leave the subject blackened by prevailing misrepresentations, and frightfully disfigured by most erroneous judgments and most unchristian practices.

I have endeavoured, in the foregoing examination, to verify the filiation of a monster, whose features and qualities must awaken, in every virtuous mind, an unspeakable sentiment of horror. It will aid the purposes, both of clear argument and of a definite result; if this review be followed by an attempt, to sum up the true state of the case. It is agreed, then, almost universally, that the Church has no power of temporal punishment.<sup>u</sup> But it is contended, that the Church may deliver over to the secular arm, and that this latter *has* that power.<sup>x</sup> Herein lies a fallacy: the state has,

<sup>u</sup> Ainsi voyons nous, que le concile de Latran sous Alexandre III. reconnaît, *que l'église rejette les exécutions sanglantes*; quoiqu'elle souffre d'être aidée par les loix des Princes Chrétiens pour reprimer les hérétiques, LA MAXIME A TONJOURS ÉTÉ CONSTATE. Fleury's Eccl. Hist. chap. 14 of the Disc. prefixed to the 16th vol.

<sup>x</sup> Les loix de l'église, consistent elles à livrer quelqu'un aux flammes? Non; mais elle abandonne les hérétiques au bras séculier pour être punis. [Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 131. c. 74.] These words do not purport to be those of Fleury nor of his Continuator, but of the Theological Faculty of Paris. The authority here re-



by the Divine law, a right to *punish*, but not to punish *opinions*: the sword of the magistrate is given, for the punishment of evil doers,<sup>y</sup> not of evil thinkers: as to the latter, it is the word of Christ, which will judge *them*, in the *last day*.<sup>z</sup> But suppose the case were otherwise. Shew me then, on this footing, that there is, in this matter, no ecclesiastical usurpation: in order to this you must prove, that the magistrate, in the coercion of heresy, is left to his liberty. Is this the fact? The farthest from it possible. Hear the canon law speaking to this effect: "The law of the state must give way to the law of the Church."<sup>a</sup> If a king shall refuse to exterminate heretics, he shall be excommunicated: if he persists, he shall forfeit his dominions; his subjects shall be released from their allegiance; his territory shall be transferred to catholics, who, *after exterminating the heretics*, shall possess it by an indisputable title."<sup>b</sup> So that the real amount of papal jurisdiction was this: it not only handed over to the civil power, but it also compelled the civil power to proceed.<sup>c</sup> The magistrate had, in this case, no

ferred to is D<sup>1</sup>Argentre: by whom the judgment of the Faculty is recorded, in a form, somewhat varying from the above, but not, for the present purpose, (which is that of a Romish statement,) materially different.

<sup>y</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 14.

<sup>z</sup> John xii. 48.

<sup>a</sup> Constitutiones principum ecclesiasticis constitutionibus non præeminent sed obsequuntur.—

Gratiani Decretum, p. i. Dist. 10.

<sup>b</sup> See the Constitutions of pope Lucius III. and pope Innocent III. in the Decretales Gregorii, lib. v. tit. 7. cc. 9 and 13. [Corpus Juris Canonici, tom. ii. pag. 751 and 758. Ed. 1839.]

<sup>c</sup> La pape punit les heritiques, non seulement de peines spirituelles, mais encore de temporelles; savoir, de confiscation de biens, et de punition corporelle



power to release his victim : the king had no prerogative of mercy.<sup>d</sup> “But these were the fruits of ignorance: men are now too enlightened to repeat such crimes.” In answer to this : I am unwilling to think, that even the Church of Rome, if it had the power, would, at this day, have the will, to renew the fires of Smithfield : still there is abundant cause to be on our guard, not only against the Church of Rome, but also against ignorance. As for ignorance, it is at all times pernicious : *such ignorance may return* : the same cause will tend to the same effect : the mischiefs of a dark night in the next week, are likely to be as bad, as those of a dark night in the last week. As for the Church of Rome ; its *administration* may be merciful, but it has never blotted these bloody ordinances out of its *book of laws* : nor will the claim of infallibility allow it to revoke a doctrinal principle, which it has once established. It cannot affirm to-day and deny to-morrow, the lawfulness of burning a heretic. By the doctrine of Roman Infallibility, the errors of that Church are made incurable.<sup>e</sup> “But may not mercy be pleaded as a motive of this severity ? May it not, for instance, be said : It is better to extirpate one heretic, than to risk the

par le bras seculier. Such is the doctrine of Augustus Trionfe, as represented by the abbé Fleury. [Eccl. Hist. b. 93. c. 43.] The constitution, above referred to, of Innocent III., has these words relating to this subject : *Moneantur autem et inducantur, et si necesse fuerit, per censuram ec-*

*clesiasticam compellantur seculares potestates.*

<sup>d</sup> Non potest magistratus civilis a pœnis eximere hæreticum seculari brachio traditum. Tanner's Theologia Scholastica, vol. 3. page 474.

<sup>e</sup> Chillingworth, Rel. of Protestants, ch. 6. § 19.]



salvation of ten thousand Christians?" I answer thus: It is not for an honest man to moot a question of expediency for the justification of a crime:<sup>f</sup> before you argue the tendency of an act, first prove the lawfulness of it: Almighty God is infinitely more merciful in seeking the salvation of souls, and infinitely wiser in providing for it, than we: yet he has forbidden this method of pursuing that end. But if you allege the motive of mercy: I answer, that this motive is not so manifest: "A great part of your doctrine," as Chillingworth truly said, "makes apparently for the temporal ends of the teachers of it."<sup>g</sup>—I have now, I trust, exculpated the *Catholic* Church from the dire reproach of religious persecution: whether you regard the scriptures, which it receives, or any judgments or decrees it ever pronounced; the practice is known to it, only as a dreadful abomination. As to the Church of *Rome*; I wish with all my heart, that it would, either by word or deed, remove from itself this hateful

<sup>f</sup> Men who moot such questions, on such subjects; are not entitled to the honour of being confuted. The case may perhaps be considered as a proper one, for the application of the precept: *Answer not a fool according to his folly*. But there is also a precept which says: *Answer a fool according to his folly*. [Prov. xxvi. 4, 5.] Should the argument of expediency, require, on this ground, to be attended to; I would briefly notice it thus: The probable effect of thus destroying one life, will be, to make ten thousand

hypocrites. No man will ever be saved as a Catholic, by merely pretending himself such in order to save his life.

<sup>g</sup> Rel. of Protestants, Preface, §. 8. I allude to the enormous riches which accrued to Rome, from keeping Christendom in subjection, and the loss of which would ensue on the separation of any kingdom from its obedience. To one who has not enquired into the subject, the amount might be thought quite incredible. See the Supplementary Remarks.



stigma. The readiest course would be, the abandonment of its pretence to infallibility: an upstart opinion, which rises to no higher antiquity, than the fifteenth century; which is repudiated by many of the most eminent names of the Romish communion; which is allowed to be no fundamental, even of the Roman creed; but which, nevertheless, presents an insurmountable barrier to the union of Christendom.

Let us now limit ourselves to view our subject, in its real form. Let us consider, how clear, in this mode of contemplation, it stands, of all just imputation. The persecution of heretics has been vindicated, as a necessary protection to social life from a demoralizing influence. Pope Leo the Great lived in times, when the Catholic Church unanimously disowned all power of secular infliction: still he seems not unwilling to accept, as a defensive benefit, what might thus be obtained from the judicature of princes.<sup>h</sup> But this is little better than to commit a crime, and to seek exculpation by a

<sup>h</sup> It is thus that he speaks of the severity, which, under the Emperor Maximus, had been exercised against the Priscillianists. "Etiam mundi principes ita hanc sacrilegam amentiam detestati sunt, ut autorem ejus cum plerisque discipulis legum publicarum ense prosternerent. Videbant enim, omnem curam honestatis auferri, omnem conjugiorum copulam solvi, simulque divinum jus humanumque sub-  
verti; si hujusmodi hominibus usquam vivere cum tali professione licuisset. Profuit diu ista districtio Ecclesiasticæ lenitatis: quæ, etsi sacerdotali contenta judicio cruentas refugit ultiones, severis tamen Christianorum principum constitutionibus adjuvatur, dum ad spiritale nonnunquam recurrunt remedium, qui timent corporale supplicium. Ep. 15. [pag. 449. Ed. 1675.]



fiction of law. The Church wants not this support: *Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis*. It is perfect in its own resources, and can, in order to its own efficiency, much better dispense with the secular arm, than employ it. For heretics, as men dangerous to society, are to be regarded with a twofold consideration; namely, of their actions, and of their opinions. With respect to their actions, it is not denied, that they are amenable to the law of the state: civil society must be at once overthrown, if violations of life and property are to gather impunity from a plea of religion. While the human law leaves a man at liberty to choose his own faith; it must not be pretended, that that faith is to licentiate his crimes. Such is the case of criminal offences: let us now consider that of opinions. From the danger of these the Church is secured, by the authority which it has, and which it is bound to exert, of separating the heretic from its communion, and of separating its own members from his evil and pernicious discourse.

Let us remember how Christianity became established in the world. It was through that evidence of truth, which God had inseparably united to it. It thus made its way in *resistance* of the temporal power: it was thus strong enough to subdue the utmost cruelty of persecution: and the Church was then able to maintain her doctrine, in ages, when there was no secular arm to punish either the infidel or the heretic. If you look to the early propagation of this doctrine, it was rapid beyond example: if you look to its practical effect, this also was



beyond example ; so quick and efficacious in the reformation of mankind, so deep and abiding in its influence on the soul : thus bringing into actual life, and diffusing among the whole body of faithful men, those forms of innocence and virtue, which pagan legislation had never realized, nor Platonic dreams had ever painted on the mind : so that the strict realities of the primitive Church are far more sublime, than ever had been, the grandest imaginations of philosophical theory. And now I ask : what enforcements were there for producing, among so many millions of men, a moral condition such as this, in which a crime was scarcely known ? If human depravity *must* be subdued ; if it thus *was* actually subdued : could this have been done by methods, more lenient than those, which, in this instance, were so mightily effective ? when the most severe of all judgments was, the anathema of the Church : by which the sinner was declared separate from God's elect people, and that only, when his own sin had already *created* the separation ; a judgment which brought with it no temporal inconvenience, but the loss of Christian society ; which was not inflicted without the most tender commiseration for the offender, and the most anxious concern for his eternal welfare ; and which was reversed on his return from his evil way. It has been said, that the civil power has a right to look to the Church for the morality of its subjects. Now it is certain, that this result would flow, from a due exercise of those functions, which God has given to the Church : and it is equally certain, that if the Church have no



power of censure, its moral efficiency is but a withered arm. The want of ecclesiastical discipline, was, I conceive, rightly understood by one of our Reformers, when he sets forth his opinion as to the consequence of it; "that a bishop could not do his duty."<sup>i</sup> These matters, when duly weighed, may dispose a candid mind, to revoke an erroneous judgment of the censures of the Church. If the practical effect of them be such as we have just seen: we may rather consider them as affording an exemplification, of a maxim, which I think I imbibed from one of the Fathers of the Church; and which may serve at once to gratify the philanthropist, and to instruct the admirer of severe punishments: "It is much easier to reform mankind by moral, than by penal applications."

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Before I dismiss the present subject; I would obviate a misunderstanding of certain scriptural passages, which might possibly be claimed as militating against my remarks.

St. John, in his second epistle, has these words: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not *into your house*, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."<sup>k</sup> The case is, that of the deceiver and the antichrist, who denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh; the infidel, wearing the name of Christian, who thus laboured to overthrow Christianity. Now it is with respect

<sup>i</sup> See Burnett's Hist. of the Ref. Part iii. book 6. page 560. [Ed. 1829.]

<sup>k</sup> 2 John 10.



to this character, that we are to understand the apostle as forbidding, on the part of the faithful, any acts of Christian fraternity, or any expressions involving a participation in his guilt. The precept of St. John then, forbids the intercourse of Christian society with a misbeliever and a hypocrite, employed in propagating impiety and blasphemy: as to any interdiction of charity to a destitute and wandering stranger; it may reasonably be considered as a case, remote from contemplation, and to which therefore these words do not in any way apply. The scope of the apostle may be illustrated by similar passages. Thus, St. Paul exhorts the Romans to *avoid* them who cause divisions and occasions of falling, contrary to the true doctrine; and he notes these men as persons of dangerous association, when he describes them, as deceiving the hearts of the simple by good words and fair speeches.<sup>1</sup> Again: the following words, referring to certain profligate heretics, may serve to unfold a motive, very different from want of charity. St. Paul, thus speaks: "From such turn away. For of this sort are they *which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women*, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts."<sup>m</sup> This language may not improbably have a pointed relation to certain specific characters of lewdness, in some of the early heretics, of which Irenæus and Epiphanius, in treating of the Valentinians, have given a full and shocking account.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xvi. 17. 18.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 5. 6.

<sup>n</sup> Grabe's Irenæus, page 31.  
Epiphan. Hær. 31. c. 21. It is

to be noted, that the time of Valentinus is near to the apostolical age.



I will add a passage from the apostolical father, Ignatius. It is as strong as the language of St. John, and it is, at the same time, quite explicit as to the charity which goes along with it. It is to be observed also, that both St. John and Ignatius have in view the same description of heretics, namely, the Docetæ: this is manifest from the context of the discourse. "I warn you," says Ignatius, "to be guarded against those brutes in human shape: whom you ought not only not to receive [into your houses], but, if it be possible, not even to meet them, but only to pray for them, if by any means they may repent: which is little to be hoped.<sup>o</sup> But [even] of bringing this to pass, Jesus Christ, who is our true life, hath the power."<sup>p</sup>

The next case is that of St. Paul, in whom the decree of excommunication is denoted by the phrase, of delivering unto Satan. But can it really be thought, that this implies a wish for the destruction of the soul? There is too much need to admit the fact, that the apostle's words have been subject to this misinterpretation, and that the practice of the Church of Rome has sought vindication in this perversion of scripture. Witness Mr. Knot, the celebrated antagonist of Chillingworth, who seems to consider the terms *anathema* and *malediction* as little else than synonymous.<sup>q</sup> And the Church of Rome itself, in its forms of

<sup>o</sup> Ὅπερ δυσκολον.

<sup>p</sup> Ignatii Ep. ad. Smyrnæos, c. 4. pag. 170. Ed. 1842.

<sup>q</sup> "That visible church which cannot err in points fundamental, doth, without distinction, pro-

pound all her definitions concerning matters of faith, to be believed under *anathemas* or *curses*." Charity maintained by Catholics, c. 3. §. 20.



excommunication, bears testimony to the same effect. But surely to construe this expression, as if it involved a wish for the perdition of a human soul; is in itself a palpable absurdity: for the apostle, in one of the two cases to which the words apply, declares the purpose of the judgment to be, the salvation of the offender's soul, and in the other, the correction of his life; this latter, doubtless, being as a means to the same ultimate end.<sup>1</sup> Now it will oftentimes be desirable, in exploring the sense of scripture, to rest satisfied with a negative interpretation: to know what it does *not* mean, without insisting upon what it does: for, by ascertaining thus much, we may save ourselves from plunging into some dreadful heresy. In the present case, we see, that the anathema is clear of all cruel and uncharitable sentiments. But we may go further than this: for it plainly appears, that the meaning of St. Paul is not malediction, but the contrary. And this might well suffice for my present purpose. If however it be desirable to give a positive explanation of the phrase, I would say, that the words are expressive not of a motive, but of an effect; and that I would consider that effect to be here put forth, for the salutary purpose, of creating a most awful impression, relative to the state of exclusion from the Church: the sinner thus being reminded, that as, by his admission to that fold, he was emancipated from slavery to the evil one, so, by his separation from it, he lapses into his primitive state of subjection to infernal tyranny and malice.<sup>2</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Tim. i. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Omnis Christianus, dilectis-

simi, qui a sacerdotibus excom-  
municatur, Satanae traditur.



may be proper to make a short remark on these words: "for the destruction of the flesh." It is only the negative import of them, which I am concerned to maintain: this is evident from my previous observations: they are quite clear of all imprecation or desire of evil to the excommunicated man. They may, I think, with reference to the style of scripture in other places,<sup>t</sup> be supposed to denote, the mortification and subduing of the fleshly lust: and this might also involve a peculiar application, to the specific crime of the incestuous Corinthian.

The next case I will consider, is presented to us in these words: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works."<sup>u</sup> In this case again, I must insist upon

Quomodo? scilicet, quia *extra* ecclesiam diabolus est, sicut *in* ecclesia Christus; ac per hoc, quasi diabolo traditur, qui ab ecclesiastica communione removetur. Unde illos, quos tunc apostolus Satanæ esse traditos prædicat, excommunicatos a se esse demonstrat. Augustine, as cited in the Decretum, Causa 11, Quæst. 3. c. 32. [I have not been able to verify this quotation in the works of Augustine: but the passage is far from being unimportant, when considered only in itself.]

<sup>t</sup> Gal. v. 19; Col. iii. 5. It is desirable to observe the similarity of the phrase which occurs in this last place; νεκρώσατε τα μέλη: which seems to convey precisely

the same idea with *ἀλεθρος της σαρκος*. But it is not to be disguised, that a different exposition of these words has been given, and that Dr. Whitby claims for it the concurrent authority of all the ancients. I would refer my reader for further information, to the remarks of this commentator: observing only, that under these different interpretations, there is no difference of judgment respecting the merciful purpose of the infliction, or the charity of St. Paul: who himself declares [2 Cor. x. 8.] respecting his apostolical authority, that it was given him for edification, and not for destruction.

<sup>u</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 14.



the negative interpretation. Whatever these words do mean; I must positively contend, that they do *not* mean malediction. This maledictive interpretation is, on *general* views, utterly inadmissible: in the present case, it is moreover excluded by *special* considerations. It is inconsistent with what has been already said respecting the merciful purpose of the anathema: it is also inconsistent with the merciful prayer, which almost immediately follows these words. Is it to be thought, that St. Paul would imprecate perdition on the soul of Alexander, and, in the very next breath, invoke mercy on the souls of those, who had treacherously abandoned him at his trial before Nero? "At my first answer," says he, "no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: may it be not laid to their charge!"<sup>x</sup> I would propose the following as possible constructions of his meaning: on none of which indeed I positively insist; although I do positively insist on the exclusion of the maledictive import. We may then consider him thus to disown all personal malice, and, according to his own precept,<sup>y</sup> to leave retribution in the hand of God, to whom it properly belongs, and who tempers judgment with mercy: as if it were said: "Far be it from you or me to avenge this treatment: let us leave it with God to deal with the case as he judges fit." Secondly, we may consider the words as those of prediction: this would be agreeable to the most ancient manuscript, and to the consent of several<sup>z</sup> ancient Fathers: in which case, the present may be numbered among

<sup>x</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 16.<sup>y</sup> Rom. xii. 19—21.<sup>z</sup> According to Whitby, it is that of *all*.



those extraordinary providences, connected with the establishment of the Gospel, which, in order to mark their intended purpose, were explained by prophecy or revelation.<sup>a</sup> Thus, the same apostle foretold the blindness of Elymas,<sup>b</sup> and St. Peter foretold the death of Sapphira:<sup>c</sup> here also the language is that of prophecy, not of malediction: it interprets for *our* edification, the judicial acts of God; those acts being thus distinguished from other unexplained dispensations, on which we are forbidden to think with severity.<sup>d</sup> This prophetic evidence might be needful to the oppressed condition of the infant Church. The same character is unfolded, under the ministry of Moses, in the destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; which was, by prophecy, specially guarded against the objections of the infidel.<sup>e</sup> On this view, the words before us, far from breathing revenge, might very naturally have been accompanied with strong emotions, of anguish blended with compassion. It is this interpretation which I am inclined to prefer. Thirdly, we may suppose the apostle to desire, not the destruction, nor the misery, of Alexander, but a salutary and merciful chastisement. My meaning will be well understood, if I refer to a sermon of Augustine's, in which he addresses his flock to this effect: "I implore you, my beloved

<sup>a</sup> On this subject, the reader will do well to consult the Expositions of Whitby and Hammond: particularly the very instructive and satisfactory Annotation of the latter. The manuscript here referred to is the Alexandrine: the

reading of which would properly be rendered thus: "the Lord WILL reward him."

<sup>b</sup> Acts xiii. 11.

<sup>c</sup> Acts v. 9.

<sup>d</sup> Luke xiii. 1—5.

<sup>e</sup> Numb. xvi. 28—30.



brethren, let my entreaties and my expostulations have the fruit of reclaiming you from this wickedness: otherwise, I trust in God that he will visit you with his scourges, *in order that you may not be condemned with the world.*"<sup>f</sup> It may be, that St. Paul felt, what Augustine has expressed: and it is very possible, that he did not feel it necessary to obviate, by explicit terms, a misconception, which, to the mind of Timothy, (to whom he writes,) or of any primitive Christian, would have been totally inadmissible.

To the remarks, thus offered, I will add, in relation to these and similar scriptural difficulties, another reference to Augustine: whose meaning I would thus represent. "The canonical books of Scripture are the only books, which I have learned to regard with a total confidence of exemption from error: and if, in these books, I meet with any thing, which *seems* contrary to truth; I will make up my mind, either that the copy is faulty, or that the translator has missed the meaning, or else that I myself have quite misunderstood it."<sup>g</sup> There is indeed much reason for a maxim, which I think belongs to Thomas à Kempis. "When we meet with a difficulty in Scripture, it will sometimes be our best way to pass on."

<sup>f</sup> Epist. 29. c. 7. [Tom. 2. pag. 51. Ed. 1679.] Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 20. c. 11.      <sup>g</sup> Epist. 82. c. 3. [Tom. 2. pag. 190. Ed. 1679.]



brother, let my criticism and my expostulations have the fruit of reclaiming you from this wickedness: otherwise, I trust in God that he will visit you with his scourges, in order that you may not be reckoned with the world. It may be that St. Paul felt what Augustine has expressed: and it is very possible, that he did not feel it necessary to obtrude, by explicit terms, a misconception which, to the mind of Timothy, (to whom he writes) or of any primitive Christian, could have been totally inadmissible.

### PART III.

To the reader, this over, I will add in relation to these and similar canonical authorities, another

#### RESOLUTION OF QUESTIONS,

#### DEDUCTION OF CONSEQUENCES,

AND

#### COLLATERAL REMARKS.







## CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THOSE ERRORS WHICH CREEDS  
OUGHT TO PROSCRIBE? THIS IS EXEMPLIFIED  
FROM SCRIPTURE.

**T**HE question, of late much agitated, respecting Creeds and Articles of Doctrine, is one, which involves the very being of Christianity. I say not this, as if there were any reasonable fear for the duration of the Gospel: that is everlasting: nor yet, for the stability of the Catholic Church: for that too is everlasting, and fixed on an everlasting rock: the gates of hell will never prevail against it. But it is not thus with regard to *our participation* in the Gospel and in the Church: there is no warrant of perpetuity here: the ark itself will float in safety, while *we* may be overwhelmed. We may find a warning in the present state of those seven churches, to which the apocalyptical mandates were sent: there is no security that the Church of this land shall not one day mourn under a like desolation. It is therefore due to the souls of men, that they should be protected against errors, which are destructive, not indeed of imperishable



truth, but of their own welfare: and every effort should be made, to avert the dreadful calamity of a people, deprived of God's true word and plunged in infidel darkness. Whether we regard the next life or this; we cannot be too resolute, in maintaining all that is essential to the true faith.

But the zeal thus exerted must be a zeal according to knowledge: it must not be blind to the difference between tenets that are essential, and others that are not so. Few things indeed have been, or can be, more injurious to Christianity, than the numbering of venial mistakes among its inviolable articles of faith. As to any practical benefit which may result from an examination of our general subject; such benefit must be counteracted, if not wholly defeated, by a neglect of the proper distinction. It will therefore be quite suitable, to offer some remarks, towards explaining the nature of those articles of faith, which the Church, in formal terms, may properly impose. I say, in formal terms; because, in regard to articles of faith considered in themselves, the Church imposes them all, whether thus enunciated or not: with regard to the time and mode of enunciation, the true principle is, that the faith was old, though the definition, when first propounded, was new.

In order to this explanation, we must have a regard to the principles, which these articles are intended to condemn. What then is the nature of these principles? Do they comprise every variety of religious error, every possible mistake as to the meaning of scripture? I trust not. The true character of them is, I conceive, that which



describes them, as *errors tending to frustrate the design of Christianity*.<sup>h</sup> This representation appears to me confirmed, by a concurrent import in the language of scripture. It is there said of the wicked prophet, that he taught Balac to cast a *stumbling-block* before the children of Israel.<sup>i</sup> Now it is to be noted respecting this doctrine of Balaam, that it is here branded as one, which a bishop was not to endure among his flock: it is also to be noted, that the *stumbling-block* is an usual figure of scriptural language, to denote any thing which causes a forfeiture of salvation. The notion thus conveyed, seems therefore, as applied to religious doctrines, remarkably coincident with that, of errors tending to frustrate the design of Christianity; that design, which brings salvation, and which conducts to it through the profession of a true faith.

I hope that this general description is sufficiently clear. If we connect with it a regard to examples; I think that its propriety will be manifest. I will therefore produce a few notices of doctrinal errors, which we learn from scripture itself to have been proscribed by infallible authority; which are therein set forth, as incompatible with Church communion; and which could not, in the nature of things, have been condemned, without the employment of articles of faith.

The first case is, that of Hymenæus and Alexander;<sup>k</sup> both anathemized by St. Paul. When we find respecting them, that they had made shipwreck

<sup>h</sup> This description is, I think, in effect, if not in words, that of Dr. Waterland.

<sup>i</sup> Rev. ii. 14.

<sup>k</sup> 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.



concerning the faith; this language seems to realize that idea of a deadly error, which I now seek to illustrate.

As to the false tenets of Hymenæus in particular; we find one of them to be specified thus: "that the resurrection is past already.<sup>1</sup> I consider then this tenet to have been proscribed by St. Paul; and I infer, that the *future* resurrection of the body, was, by that apostle himself, considered as an article of faith, indispensable to Church communion. Now the denial of a bodily resurrection is found, among the early heresies, in connexion with the most licentious principles. As it occurs here, it may probably denote, an exemption of the whole man, both soul and body, from the future judgment of God. For, while the body was thus exempted from retribution; the soul, according to the vulgar apprehension, was, as we learn from Tertullian, esteemed to be, by reason of an incorporeal nature, necessarily exempt from the possibility of suffering: and it appears from Justin Martyr, that there was a philosophical opinion to the same effect.<sup>m</sup> If such were the moral complexion of this heresy; it would obviously carry along with it a warrant of impunity to guilt. It may fortify this representation, when you find the apostle, after mentioning the false

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 18.

<sup>m</sup> Simplicior quisque fautor sententiæ nostræ, putabit, carnem etiam idcirco repræsentandam esse judicio, quia aliter anima non capiat passionem tormenti seu refrigerii, utpote incorporealis: hoc enim vulgus existimat. Tertull. de Res. Carn. c. 17. pag. 335. Ed.

1664. Άλλοι δε τινες, υποστησαμενοι αθανατον και ασωματον την ψυχην, ουτε κακον τι δρασαντες ηγουνται δωσειν δικην (απαθες γαρ το ασωματον) ουτε αθανατου αυτης υπαρχουσης, δεονται τι του θεου ετι. Justin Mart. Dial cum Tryph. sub init.



tenet, alleging in contradiction of it, the sure foundation, or inflexible will of God relating to the gospel dispensation: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity:" for these words might seem to be directed against the said heresy, as being not only false, but also demoralizing. We see then the character and tendency of this error; we see how it would frustrate the design of Christianity.

The next case is that, of the deceiver and the antichrist, who denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh.<sup>n</sup> On this case, it will suffice to refer to the foregoing matter of this treatise :<sup>o</sup> where the same character and tendency, which I have ascribed to the last error, is also explained and proved respecting this.

I will proceed to speak more particularly of the heresy of the Nicolaitans: which is, in the following words, identified with the doctrine of Balaam. "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."<sup>p</sup> I may here observe, that the way of Balaam is spoken of in the second epistle of St. Peter,<sup>q</sup> and in the epistle of St. Jude;<sup>r</sup> that it occurs in these epistles in a manner, which indicates a close connexion with our present sub-

<sup>n</sup> 2 John 7.

<sup>o</sup> Part I. c. 4. pages 22, 23.

<sup>p</sup> Rev. ii. 14.

<sup>q</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 15.

<sup>r</sup> Ver. ii.



ject; and that those two epistles may contribute much, towards furthering our present design. For they will greatly illustrate the nature of the Nicolaitan errors; their entire repugnance to the profession of the Gospel; and the consequent necessity there was, to demand, that these errors should be renounced by all members of the Church.

It appears then, that one of the Nicolaitan errors consisted, in maintaining the lawfulness of eating things sacrificed to idols: that is, of doing that act, which, by the law of Gentile persecution, was prescribed, as the test, by which a man professed himself a heathen, abjured Christianity, and declared his belief that the Gospel was a falsehood. It is plain, that this would tend to frustrate the design of Christianity; inasmuch as it would take away an essential part of the proof and evidence, provided by God for the establishment of it. For the truth of the Gospel was, by the design of God, to be made manifest by the testimony of witnesses or martyrs, whom no terror nor extreme cruelty could prevail on to suppress the truth; that truth, respecting which, in the case of the earliest Christians, it was impossible they should be deceived, while it was thus rendered incredible that they should attempt to deceive mankind. To suppress this testimony in the hour of trial, was to take away the foundation from the faith of after ages: it was to bring dishonour and infamy upon the Gospel and upon the promise of God: for he had promised, that his protection and his sustaining arm should never be wanting to those, who steadfastly maintained their faith to the end. Such was the



character of that doctrine, which taught the lawfulness of partaking in the idolatrous feast. It is this doctrine, respecting the lawfulness of eating things sacrificed to idols, which I therefore consider to be the same with that designated by St. Jude, as denying our Lord Jesus Christ;<sup>s</sup> and I conceive that St. Peter also, in his second epistle,<sup>t</sup> has a view to this same particular, when, in speaking of the false teachers who should arise, and of the damnable heresies which they should bring in, he particularly fixes upon them this characteristic: “denying the Lord that bought them.”

Respecting the other Nicolaitan impiety, which taught the lawfulness of fornication: it is hardly necessary, in this case, to insist on a tendency to frustrate the design of Christianity. For what could be more repugnant to that Gospel, of which it is the professed design, to teach us, that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, thus only hoping for the blessed consummation of our heavenly calling? But I would remark, that this same tenet seems to have been contemplated by St. Jude,<sup>u</sup> when he speaks of those heretical teachers as men, who turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and who defiled the flesh. The same remark may possibly apply to St. Peter in his second epistle; where he also speaks of men, who walked after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness<sup>x</sup> having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin,<sup>y</sup> and alluring to themselves disciples

<sup>s</sup> Ver. 4.<sup>t</sup> ii. 1.<sup>u</sup> Ver. 4 and 8.<sup>x</sup> ii 10.<sup>y</sup> ii. 14.



through the lusts of the flesh and through much wantonness.<sup>a</sup>

I am led to consider the three apostles as having in view the same doctrines, and the same description of persons; because we not only find in them a strong condemnation of some particular heresy; we find also that heresy set forth, with a coincidence of colour and delineation: which is apparent in other respects, but which is particularly striking in ascribing to it, the similitude of the wickedness of Balaam.

We have seen then, in each of those heterodox tenets, separately considered, an inherent tendency to frustrate the design of Christianity. Such a tenet would thus be an effectual stumbling-block to the soul: and he who embraced it, must, according to the terms of the Gospel, incur the certain forfeiture of eternal life. It is to this effect that St. Peter again, speaking of those, who suffered themselves to be misled by these heretical teachers, and referring particularly to the lewd immorality, which commonly lay concealed under the exterior pretences of heresy; declares their state to be worse than that of pagans. "For if," says he, "after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy

<sup>a</sup> ii. 18.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 20.



commandment delivered to them.”<sup>a</sup> It is to the same tenor, and of the same persons, that St. Jude speaks, when he calls to remembrance those, who, after they had been once saved out of Egypt, were afterwards destroyed for their unbelief; and when he holds forth a warning in the doom of the fallen angels, who, from having once been the sons of heavenly glory and delight, were now reserved for judgment under darkness and in everlasting chains. We are most particularly to notice the purport of these passages, to set forth *the state of a Christian lapsed into heresy*; the state of one, to whom all the promises of the Gospel were cancelled, and whose apostacy had rendered him more a child of wrath, than he was, in his primitive unconverted ignorance and estrangement from God.

There is also another particular specified by St. Peter, as one of the characters of heresy in general: “Many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”<sup>b</sup> It is well known, that the ancient heretics, passing among the world under the common name of Christians, thereby brought great discredit and obloquy on the Gospel, and thus created a great obstruction to the propagation of Christianity. Here was another character, which tended to frustrate the design of Christianity; and which consequently rendered it necessary, that the professors of such tenets should be expelled from the fold of the Church, discarded and disowned by the true members of it.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 20.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 2.



## CHAPTER II.

THE SAME SUBJECT ILLUSTRATED, FROM THE HISTORY  
OF THE TIME SUBSEQUENT TO THE DATE OF  
SCRIPTURE.

**I** HAVE already argued, with respect to the necessity of articles of faith; that it continued after the age of the first apostles: that the use of them, after that age, is liable to no valid objection from the plea of a fallible nature: and again, that the imposition of them does not involve any assumption of infallibility. My present endeavour will relate to those definitions of the faith, which *have* thus arisen: from them I shall select examples, for the purpose of shewing their necessity; that is, in other words, of shewing, with respect to the errors they condemn, that they were errors tending to frustrate the design of Christianity.

The following remark may have been partly intimated before: but a repetition, at this time, may be not unserviceable towards a true view of the present question. We find, from apostolical authority, that the errors of the Docetæ, of Hymenæus, and of Alexander; were fit for nothing better than the anathema of the Church. And will you say,



that these errors, had they first emerged after the death of all the apostles, would then have been fit for Christian communion? Will you say, that it would then have been no bar to the sacraments, nor to the kingdom of heaven, though a man should deny that Christ came in the flesh, or that the dead shall rise? or though he should believe it lawful to commit fornication? Will you say, that it is certain from scripture, that such errors would never arise after all the apostles were dead? Or would there not be more reason for saying, that it was thus quite certain, that they *would* arise? Would you suppose it to have been the will of the first apostles, that such errors, if first emerging after their death, should be admitted into the body of Christian doctrine? If you would thus restrain to the age of the first apostles, the lawful use of articles of faith: I see not how you can escape from the embarrassment of these questions.

I will proceed to specify some of those occasions, on which, after the apostolic age, it was needful to set forth, and to prescribe, new definitions of the faith. Now the doctrines chiefly assailed by the ancient heretics, were those of the blessed Trinity and of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ: it is with reference to these doctrines, that I will endeavour to exemplify my subject.

What then can we say of the Sabellians or Patripassians? Some, I think, by whom their doctrine has been defended, have been not unwilling to accept the merit, of thereby simplifying religion, and of thus rendering it more approvable to human



reason. But a little reflection may discover to us, that religion is in no way beholden to their patronage. And indeed the same remark may here be applied, to all the various classes of Unitarians: they all, I believe, consider it as a strong recommendation of their novelties, that it places the doctrine of Christianity in a form of great simplicity. But is this true? You say, "that there is only one person in the Godhead." Now I will admit, that there are no ideas here presented, but such as are extremely simple. But this is only a small part of the case: for the nature of the case is, that when these ideas, so simple in themselves, are propounded to me in this form; I am, at the same time, supposed to believe the whole of the canonical scriptures: and then, your very simple ideas are found to involve a degree of perplexity and confusion, which, as far as I know, is perfectly unparalleled. Has it not been found in fact, that the mind thus persuaded, has felt itself utterly bewildered, and unable to elude the consciousness of absurdity and contradiction? Has not this embarrassment prompted some, to cut the knot which they could not untie, and to clear away the repugnancies of scripture, by a detruncation of the Canon, or by new translations, so as to silence the voice of confutation, and to make a testimony, which they could not find? Apply this particularly to the Sabellians: and what else can we say of a system, which teaches us to regard God the Father as begetting himself; Jesus Christ, as sitting down at his own right hand; the Son of God, as making an atonement to himself? On this



view, the same person both pays and receives the ransom of our souls: and our Saviour will be found to pray to himself, that he may be glorified with the same glory which he had with himself before the world was. He will be found in effect to teach thus: I came forth from myself: I sent myself: I and I are one.<sup>c</sup> Now if this representation has a tendency to present Christianity in a form, which is incredible and absurd: it must then appear, that it has a tendency to frustrate the design of Christianity: for it was a part of that design, that Christianity should commend itself, by reasonable evidence, to the understandings of reasonable beings. Hence then arose the necessity of our being taught by the Church, that we are not to confound the Persons of the Godhead, and that “There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.”

Again: If it be necessary to the integrity of the faith, to believe that our Saviour was man, as well as God; it was necessary to proscribe all those several innovations, by which it was taught, at one time, that he had not a human nature; at another, that he had not a human understanding; and at another, that he had not a human will. For if Christ had not a human will, or a human understanding, he could not be a man: if he was not a man, his death and resurrection are a mere nullity, since he could not, in his Divine nature, be capable of either: and thus the whole mystery of the Gospel is at once subverted.

<sup>c</sup> See Epiph. Hær. 57. c. 3. and Fleury's Discourse prefixed Tertull. adv. Praxean, c. 11. to the 8th vol. of his hist. c. 11.



With respect more especially to the doctrine of Eutyches, otherwise known as the Monophysite doctrine, which separated the human nature from the person of Christ; we have upon record a very remarkable narrative. A prince of the Saracens, named Alamundarus, had been converted to the Christian faith. Great exertions were made to inoculate him with the Monophysite heresy: he remained however firm to the Catholic communion. Two Eutychian bishops were selected for the work of his conversion. In order to the confutation of their arguments, he had recourse to the following artifice: whatever we may think of it in any other respect, it is at least allowable to avail ourselves of a record, which makes the present subject very intelligible. He told these bishops, that he had had a letter to inform him, that the Archangel Michael was dead. The bishops insisted upon it, that the thing was impossible: alleging, I suppose, that an angel was exempt from the possibility of death. Upon which admission, Alamundarus, to the confusion of his opponents, establishes, in reply, the following irrefragable confutation of the Monophysite heresy. "If even an angel is exempt, by nature, from the possibility of suffering and of death; how is it possible, that Christ should have been crucified, if he had only a Divine nature, and not a human?"<sup>a</sup> Observe now the consequences of this: If Christ died not, then no atonement has been made for the sins of men. Again: If Christ died not,

<sup>a</sup> Theodori Lectoris Hist. Eccl. siastical Historians, vol. 3. page lib. 2. c. 35. [Reading's Eccle- 579. Ed. 1720.]



then he rose not from the dead : and if this latter be admitted, then it will appear that Christianity is merely a fabulous doctrine. For thus we are assured by St. Paul : “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” You see then, if this heresy be admitted, how completely it overthrows the faith of a Christian. And you thus learn also, how necessary it was, that the Church, after these heresies had been promulgated, should prescribe, as a part of the rule for a Christian’s faith, words such as these : “Perfect God ; and perfect Man, subsisting of a reasonable soul and of human flesh.”

It is highly desirable to obviate, at this time, a very dangerous mispersuasion. I have maintained, respecting the quality of errors, which justly incur the anathema of the Church ; that it consists, in their tendency to frustrate the design of Christianity. I will now add, that this tendency may, in many cases, exist, where it is not suspected : it may be perfectly real, where it is not palpable to every mind. In a case of this nature, the question may sometimes be put : “Where can be the harm of such an opinion ? If it be not true, still a man may be none the worse for it.” Now a case like this discovers the strong necessity, on the one hand, of an enlightened vigilance ; and, on the other, of a due submission. It is not always competent for an uninstructed mind, to estimate the magnitude of evil, which lies enwrapped and concealed in an heretical statement. I shall be better understood, if I reason from an example : I will choose that of the Monothelites : for I know of none, in which the



evil was at once so great, and so likely to elude discernment. It was taught by these heretics, that there was in our blessed Saviour, only one will. In this instance it might be urged, that the opinion, even though not metaphysically true, was nevertheless harmless and inoffensive; that the debating of it, was carrying contention to an extreme nicety; and that clergymen, who can find leisure for such questions, must have abundance of time upon their hands. It might even be contended, that the assertion was true: for so in one sense it was,<sup>e</sup> though not in the sense it was meant to bear. But now on the other hand, look at this latter sense: I mean that, which the words were actually meant to bear: you will then find the true character of it, as involving, in its effect, a denial of Christianity, and as trampling upon both the truth of God and the salvation of mankind. For it was the purpose of this heresy, not only according to the suspicions of its enemies, but also according to the confession of its abettors; to carry along with it a denial of the human nature of Christ. See then the progression of consequences. If Christ had not a human will, he had not a human nature: for without a human will, a man cannot be: and if he had not a human nature, he could neither be born, nor die, nor rise again.

The humble and discreet Christian may guard

<sup>e</sup> That is, if it was meant to denote an unity of *concord*. It is on the supposition of this meaning, that pope John IV. seeks to exculpate his predecessor Honorius: but Mons. Dupin, himself a member of the Church of Rome, will admit of no excuses, and insists upon it, that Pope Honorius was a heretic. See his shorter Ecclesiastical History.



the purity of his faith, by a considerate regard to those words of St. Paul: where, seemingly with reference to heretical teachers, he speaks of the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.<sup>f</sup> And again, with a more manifest application to the same subject, he says: "Now I beseech you, brethren, observe narrowly them, who, contrary to the doctrine which *you* have learned, make divisions and occasions of falling: and avoid them: for such men are not servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, but of their own belly, and they beguile the hearts of the unsuspecting, by means of good words and fair speeches."<sup>g</sup> I would not have you, from these words, to claim a warrant for imputing evil motives, to every man, who professes an unsound creed: his error may be that of ignorance and infirmity, and such, as the mercy of God will one day dissipate: nor are you entitled to apply, from suspicion, that which St. Paul knew from revelation. But this I would impress upon you: that when an error of the faith is proposed to your acceptance, you must be fully prepared to find, that it will be put in a very seductive form of language, so that you shall not at once see the full amount, and real quality, of it; while at the same time you will be liable, when once deceived, to follow your error into ulterior and most atrocious consequences. Thus, should you be at once called upon to renounce Christianity, you would recoil with horror. But suppose the adversary should make his approaches with state-

<sup>f</sup> Eph. iv. 14.<sup>g</sup> Rom. xvi. 17.



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ments such as these : namely, that our Saviour had not a human will, but only a Divine ; or that he had not a human understanding, but only a Divine : these propositions would perhaps excite no such repugnance, and yet, when followed out into their unavoidable consequences, would lead to the same issue. Nor let it mislead you, if you find such statements put forth in language, which breathes a fragrance of the most ardent and exalted piety : they do very commonly, in point of exterior, wear such a form, that you might almost suppose the sense of religion to be stronger, in the abettors of such opinions, than in all other men ; you might almost think, that no affections or designs were concerned in the case, but such as were heavenly, and purified from every gross and sublunary influence. Thus, among the early heretics, some denied that our Saviour had a human body, and some, that he had a human soul : in each case, I think, the motive was pretended to, of doing honour to the Godhead of Christ : in each case, the real tendency of the doctrine was, an extinction of the Christian faith.

I will, in conclusion, avail myself of an illustration, for which I am indebted to Epiphanius : though I shall somewhat modify his representation, and extend the remark beyond his own immediate application of it. “ The first approach of heresy is similar to that of a certain animal, well known in Egypt : it moves only in the dark, and its bite, at the moment, is quite unattended with pain, but gradually spreads over all the limbs a venomous infusion, which is followed by death. In like manner,



heresy, when first proposed to the mind, may sometimes look like a trifle, but when imbibed with all its consequences, it then brings to light, in the destruction of a human soul, the full extent of its malignity."<sup>h</sup>

<sup>h</sup> Panarium. Hær. 55. sub fin. Ed. 1682.



## CHAPTER III.

HENCE IS OBTAINED A SOLUTION OF THE QUESTION:  
WHAT ARE FUNDAMENTALS?

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Liquido patet, esse nonnullos articulos, in quibus qui dissentit, extra fœdus statuendus sit: alios vero, in quibus dissentire liceat salvo fœdere . . . . . His itaque perpensis, magni videatur res et momenti et usus esse, ut definiatur, qualia sint illa et quantæ latitudinis, quæ ab ecclesiæ corpore homines penitus divellant, et a communione fidelium eliminant. Quod si quis putet, hoc jam pridem factum esse; videat ille etiam atque etiam, quam sincere et moderate.<sup>1</sup>

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**T**HE mention of Fundamentals is of very frequent occurrence in the contentions of opposing sects. The use of the term is vague, while its import is momentous: there thus arises urgent reason, for endeavouring to fix its due application. It has not happened to me, to be satisfied with any efforts to that end, which have come within my knowledge.

The general notion of a fundamental is, that it

<sup>1</sup> Lord Bacon de Augm. Scient. Lib. 9. page 265. Vol. 1. of his Works. [Ed. 1730.]



is a doctrine indispensably necessary to salvation. In its relation to Christianity, the term, being figurative, may be well explained by its literal import; by which it denotes something, in the absence of which, a building would sink into a ruin: so also, a fundamental truth is one, in the absence of which, a man's faith would cease to be that faith, by which he can be saved. On the same view, a fundamental error is, an error inconsistent with salvation: an error, which cannot be combined with a true profession of the Gospel; which destroys the very existence of Christianity in the human soul, and which realizes the language of St Paul, when he speaks of overthrowing the faith.<sup>k</sup> Such is the *general* character of fundamental truths, and of fundamental errors. But the question is: how are we to know, what particular truths, and what particular errors, are proper, respectively, to be thus denoted?

The Christian world is divided into a vast multitude of separated communions. It was the will of our Divine Master, that there should be only one. It will therefore follow, that of these multitudinous sects, all but one must be wrong. Yet it is, I believe, a common persuasion, that all these sects are in the way of salvation, provided they do not err in fundamentals.

With regard to the various tenets, which, from time to time, have been reckoned fundamental; we can hardly help being impressed with characters of flagrant absurdity. When the fancy is heated with some particular notion; it is easy to imagine, re-

<sup>k</sup> 2 Tim. ii 18.



specting such peculiarity, that it involves almost the whole of religion. Should it happen, that men have been prompted by the motive of worldly advantage, which oftentimes accrues from propounding novelties: it is by no means unnatural, that their pretended discovery should be put forth, as the only key to open the gate of heaven. Erasmus had a doubt respecting the Apostles' Creed; he doubted, whether it was really composed by the twelve apostles: the Paris theologians condemn Erasmus, pronounce judgment that the creed was so composed, and declare their judgment to be a fundamental: now according to what is, at this time, well known and never disputed, it will appear, that this judgment, far from being fundamental, was not even true.<sup>1</sup> As for the Calvinistic doctrine of Final Assurance; Beza speaks of it as the principal basis of our salvation, and the most vital point of Christianity: "*præcipuam salutis nostræ basin, religionis caput.*"<sup>m</sup> How wretched then must have been the condition of Christians for fifteen centuries! for this doctrine was never known before the time of Calvin: and the holy martyrs, while their faith was sustained and triumphant under the most excruciating torments, must, on this view, have been totally ignorant of the principal basis of their salvation. In another instance, we find a number of Roman theologians pronouncing, that the celibacy of the clergy, and communion under one kind, were among the very

<sup>1</sup> See D'Argentré, tom. 2. page 60, and Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. 131. c. 74. <sup>m</sup> Brevis explicatio totius Christianismi cap. 8. Aph. 1.



foundations of Christianity:<sup>n</sup> on this supposition, the first apostles could not be true Christians: for they all administered the cup to the laity; and as to marriage, it is certain, that one of them was admitted into that holy estate, and it seems to be an ancient and approved opinion, that they all were. On another occasion, a vulgar error relating to Mary Magdalene, is, by the theological faculty of Paris, if not pronounced fundamental, classed, at least, among the traditions of the holy Fathers, received throughout the [universal] Church; and the contrary opinion is spoken of as one, which is not to be endured, and which all members of the faculty are forbidden to teach.<sup>o</sup> Victor, bishop of Rome, seems to have imagined a fundamental, in the time of keeping Easter; which is an indifferent point: the Monothelites seem, impliedly at least, to have affirmed the same opinion respecting their peculiar doctrine; which is a vile heresy.

But the question is soon settled. To enumerate all fundamental errors, would be a vain attempt: for it is surely beyond our power to enumerate all the possible enunciations of falsehood, which would subvert Christianity and frustrate the design of it. By parity of reasoning, it is equally beyond the power of man to enumerate all fundamental truths: because, if the number of errors be undefinable, that of the opposite truths must be so likewise; and the statements of the truths were drawn up, only for the contradiction of the errors. For example,

<sup>n</sup> De donner des femmes aux catholique. Fleury's E. H. b. pretres, et le calice aux seculiers, 145, c. 27.

c'était renverser toute la foi    <sup>o</sup> D'Argentré, tom. ii. pages 1, 2.



that the Son of God is consubstantial with the Father, is, and always was, a fundamental of Christianity: but who, in formal terms would have alleged it as being such, before Arius had taught the contrary? It is to be considered, that it is not every mistake relating to religion, which is inconsistent with salvation. Errors, remarkable in themselves, but void of all deadly malignity; have occurred among the best Christians. Thus, Irenæus believed, that our blessed Saviour lived to more than fifty years of age. And Gregory the Great was the first author of that mistake, which has become so inveterate, of ascribing to Mary Magdalene a character of lewdness and prostitution. So that it is not every false opinion, which is therefore heretical: nor is the truth opposed to it, to be considered a fundamental. This view will, if I mistake not, find confirmation in Scripture. We know on the authority of St. Paul, that the Resurrection of the Dead is a fundamental position.<sup>p</sup> We may infer, on the other hand, from the same authority, that there are other positions, which, though true, are *not* fundamental: and that there is, among the incidents of our imperfect nature, a possibility of such misapprehension, as is quite exempt from every heretical quality; misapprehension, which is to be regarded with tenderness; and which is to be treated with such circumspection, that we are, in consideration of it, even required to abstain from actions, in themselves lawful, but liable through human weakness and imperfect knowledge, to be perniciously

<sup>p</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 18. and 1 Tim. i. 20.



misunderstood.<sup>a</sup> The question then is, how to draw the line? What is the error, which is still consistent with Church communion? and what is that, which is incompatible with it? This question, as it applies to any particular doctrines, considered singly and in themselves; must ever rest in the determination of the Church; such determination to be exercised when the need for it may arise, and to be exercised with prayer for that direction, which God has promised to his faithful people. Bishop Tomline has indeed observed, that "the Gospel nowhere informs us, what degree of error will exclude from eternal happiness."<sup>r</sup> Now I will wave discussing, on an abstract view, the merits of this position. I will content myself with saying, that the bishop's application of it to this subject, is temerarious and pernicious: for the effect of it must be, to preclude the judgment of the Church relating to certain doctrines, respecting which it declares, that they have no hope of salvation. If Scripture does not determine this by any previous and abstract rule: it does nevertheless plainly set forth the constitution of a Church, which has a competent authority, and to which God has promised a competent direction. The danger of the bishop's principle may be discovered in this respect: it would preclude the use of all creeds whatever: thus throwing down the fences of Christianity, and allowing, under that hallowed name, an unrestrained currency to every falsehood. For that which the Church says ex-

<sup>a</sup> See the 8th and 10th chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

<sup>r</sup> Elements of Christian Theology, part. iii. article 8.



plicitly in the Athanasian Creed, it says impliedly in its other creeds. With regard, for example, to the Apostle's Creed: this formulary puts forth conditions, on which the Church admits to communion. Now whether, in the use of this creed, the Church admits or repels; it does so, because the doctrine, thus prescribed, is necessary to salvation. It is on this ground only, that the Church repels from communion: namely, that the faith of the individual cannot inherit salvation. The terms of Christian communion, and the terms of salvation, are essentially the same.

But though it were even impossible to produce a scriptural definition, which might be adequate to the present need: still it must not be admitted, that we have no power of tracing the differential characters of error, so as to fix, in any particular instance, the needful distinction of fundamentals. This will be better understood from examples. I will select the two following: First, the error of believing that our Saviour lived above fifty years: Secondly, that of believing that he had not a human body. Now both these doctrines are false: of the first the denial is not a fundamental: of the second it is. For, if you consider the first; you cannot imagine any one way in which Christianity is thus impaired, either in its authority, or its efficacy: the error is one, which does not enfeeble the proofs of truth, nor the obligation of precepts, nor the cogency of motives to a good life. But if you consider the second: you must discover in it a total abrogation of Christianity. For if this doctrine be true, it cannot be true that Christ rose from the dead; and if this latter doctrine



be not true, then Christianity is not true. On this footing, we can have no reasonable confidence in any thing which Christianity teaches: for, as Tertullian argued, if Christ could deceive mankind as to his humanity, it was much easier to do so as to his Godhead. The latter then, of these two errors, involves a total frustration of the design of Christianity: the former is entirely clear of that character.

While I would thus insist on the possibility, and the duty, of distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental errors: I am anxious to guard against the supposition, that there are, relating to the sense of Scripture, any possible mistakes whatever, which we are not bound most sedulously to avoid. A mistake, in itself comparatively harmless, may be the parent, or the auxiliary, of consequences, which are quite otherwise: and that inattention, which is heedless of a lesser error, will be not unfavourable to the admission of a greater. Indeed, it is quite inconsistent with all dutiful regard to God, that we should be indifferent about the right perception of any truth, which he has revealed. We have reason, for example, to think that the Thessalonians, in relation to the coming of the day of Christ, either had imbibed a false opinion, or were in danger of doing so: now as to the error, the apostle does not anathematize, nor even severely reprehend it: but he plainly regards it as an opinion, which, by the application of better knowledge, it was proper to rectify; and he says, with relation to this very case: "Let no man deceive you by any means."



It will not be improper, to urge the necessity of clear notions respecting fundamentals. Lord Bacon considered the question as most important to the peace of the Church: and indeed, if we value that blessing, we can hardly be too anxious, that it should not be disturbed, by regarding as a heresy, every mere mistake. If the due distinction be not maintained; the consequence must be such, as not only to fill the world with tumult, but also to plunge every heart into dejection. For who, on this supposition, can have a good conscience towards God? Who is the man, that can indulge a confidence, of being free from all mistake in the construction of scripture language? By that great philosopher however, the subject has been regarded, as one of the void spaces of human learning, which it was reserved for the diligence of future ages to fill up. That progressive time has not, in every case, supplied the wants thus indicated; may be readily seen from a view of eminent names, connected with this department of theological labour. Bishop Pearson, for instance, speaks of the Apostles' Creed, as "being nothing else but a brief comprehension of the most necessary matters of faith," and as being "fundamental in respect of other truths."<sup>1</sup> On this footing it would appear, that the doctrines of the Atonement and of Original Sin, are not fundamental. We will next advert to Mons. Daillé: he is a lively French Protestant, and has no objection to crack a joke at the expence of the Fathers. With respect to these venerable men, he chooses, erroneously, to consider their Creeds

<sup>1</sup> Pearson on the Creed, vol. i. pages 29, 30. [Ed. 1797.]



and Synodical decrees to be, as it were, their catalogues of fundamentals; and he finds, that these catalogues are, *with regard to modern use*, somewhat defective.<sup>u</sup> But the truth is, that fundamentals in our time were fundamentals in theirs. If you ask, why the Fathers have no statements relating to certain points which, in modern times, are claimed to be fundamental: the reason is, because they involve notions, (such as the novelties of the Presbyterians, Independents, and French Calvinists,) which never entered into *their* heads, and it was not their practice to start such questions, but to decide them when started by others. The most remarkable case is that of Chillingworth: here we view a concatenation of error, the final issue of which is dreadful. First, he takes it for granted, that the creed called the Apostles' Creed is really the composition of the twelve Apostles: this false position forms, in part, the groundwork of a most alarming inference. Secondly, he assumes, that it contains all points of necessary belief; that it is a perfect summary of the fundamentals of the Christian faith.<sup>x</sup> But we are to consider, that it was never intended for any such use: the chief design of it is, not *didactical* of things to be believed, but *cautionary* against things *not* to be believed. Again, he maintains, that the Apostles put into their creed, all the necessary points of simple belief.<sup>y</sup> How, says he, can it be called the Apostles' Creed, if it does not contain all points of explicit belief which they taught as necessary for salva-

<sup>u</sup> De l'Emploi des Peres, p. i.  
c. 8, near the end.

<sup>x</sup> Rel. of Prot. c. 4. § 31.

<sup>y</sup> Ibid. § 72.



tion?<sup>a</sup> Again, let us advert to those words of our Lord: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Now it is plainly the tenour of Mr. Chillingworth's remarks to suppose, that the Apostles were thus required to teach, *restrictedly*, all such things only *as were necessary to salvation*, and that all such things they accordingly inserted in their creed.<sup>a</sup> Again, treading in the steps of his friend Dr. Potter, he puts this question: How can it be necessary for any Christian to have more in his creed than the Apostles had?<sup>b</sup> But this is not all: he puts the Apostles' Creed on the same basis with the Canon of Scripture. "Universal and never-failing tradition," says he, "hath given this testimony both to creed and scripture, that they both, by the works of God, were sealed, and testified to be the words of God."<sup>c</sup> This will introduce a broad line of demarcation between this creed, and the other two which we receive: these latter, it is obvious, will thus occupy a much lower gradation of authority. The question is then: what amount of authority would he allow *them*? You may judge from these words. "The Fathers of the Church in after times might have just cause to declare their judgment, touching the sense of some general articles of the [Apostles'] Creed: but to oblige others to receive their declarations under pain of damnation, what warrant they had, I know not."<sup>d</sup> The following

<sup>a</sup> Ibid. § 73.

to be preached to all, and believed by all."

<sup>a</sup> Ibid. § 38. See also § 23.

"The Apostles' Creed contains all those points of belief, which were, by God's command, of necessity

<sup>b</sup> C. 4. § 65 and 67.

<sup>c</sup> C. 4. § 13.

<sup>d</sup> C. 4. § 18.



passages are almost too dreadful to recite : but it is quite necessary, that a full and distinct view should be given, of the dangers attending upon a misconception of this subject. Mr. Knott asks, why certain articles are mentioned in this creed, while others are omitted. Mr. Chillingworth answers : “ I refer you to the Apostles for an answer, who put that in, and left this out, of their creed, and yet sure, were not so forgetful, after the receiving of the Holy Ghost, as to leave out any prime and principal foundation of the faith.” Again, he seems to speak to this effect : That all fundamentals are contained in the Apostles’ Creed, and that, if he is deceived in this supposition, it is the Apostles’ fault and not his own.<sup>f</sup> Such are the consequences deduced from believing, first that this creed was the work of the Apostles ; and secondly, that it was composed for a use quite foreign to its true design.

On the whole I do not scruple to say, that Mr. Knott the Jesuit, appears to have held, on the subject of both fundamentals and creeds, a more correct judgment than his celebrated antagonist. I would thus abbreviate his words. “ There are, *omitted in the creed*, as many fundamentals, as there are, have been, and may be, heresies, of which the creed does not contain the contrary truths. For every fundamental error must have a contrary fundamental truth ; because of two contradictory propositions, if the one is false, the other must be true ; and, according to philosophy, THE PRIVATION IS MEASURED BY THE FORM TO WHICH IT IS REPUGNANT. If therefore the creed contain all fundamentals ; it

• Ibid. § 76.

• Ibid. § 84.



must, explicitly or by clear consequence, contain a contradiction of innumerable heresies: which no rational man will affirm that it does."<sup>g</sup>

And here I will take occasion to say respecting fundamentals; that the term, as understood in common use, applies only to *statements of doctrine, drawn up for the contradiction of error*. These statements, as they appear in our creeds, are affirmative in form, but negative, as I contend, in design. I have already given my reasons for maintaining, that they never would have been framed, but on account of some heresy which it was necessary to deny: and I have also shewn, that, as a means of doing this, the affirmative form would necessarily be preferred to the negative. If you ask for the body of doctrine, originally and designedly *positive*, you will find it in Holy Writ and nowhere else. And therefore, the Presbyterian ministers, at the Savoy conference, seem to me to have put forth a demand, which is downright nonsense. They require, that our catechisms, or public systems of doctrine, should contain "a brief abstract of all such doctrines, as are necessary to be believed."<sup>h</sup> Such catechisms must have contained, not only the *cautionary* fundamentals of our creeds, but also, the whole body of canonical scripture. Otherwise, tell me, I pray, how much of Scripture is there, which it is not necessary for a Christian to believe? If such then be your catechism, what will become of your brief abstract? Or, do you mean, by doctrines necessary to be believed,

<sup>g</sup> C. 4. § 15, of Knott's book.

<sup>h</sup> Collier's Eccl. Hist. vol. 2. page 879.



to denote only your own sectarian statements, and to exclude the text of Scripture? There seems here to be a great confusion of ideas respecting fundamentals, and doctrines necessary to be believed. Let us endeavour then to distinguish these terms. A fundamental error, is one, which, considered in itself, overthrows Christianity: a fundamental truth, is a contradiction of a fundamental error. The customary use of the word is limited to this application. But if you choose, by this word, to understand, every doctrine which it is necessary to believe; and if, on this footing, you would ask, what is the extent of fundamental doctrine? I can only, conformably to Gerson, answer you thus: Every proposition is a fundamental, which, either in formal terms, or by a legitimate consequence, is contained in Scripture.

I will conclude this chapter with a statement of the true relation which exists between fundamentals and creeds. It is certain, that no doctrines ought to be contained in creeds, but such as are fundamental: of this the reason is plain; because creeds are terms of communion, and these latter are the same with conditions of salvation: if therefore an error be not destructive of salvation, it is not a fundamental error, nor is the contradiction of it a fundamental truth. The same remark ought to be extended to cases of anathema and excommunication. Thus with respect to the doctrine of transubstantiation: suppose this doctrine were true: still it would appear, I think, by the judgment of Mons. Dupin and of other eminent Romanists, that it is not a fundamental: in which case it is impos-



sible, without a most atrocious crime, to anathematize any man for refusing to conform to it: and yet this has been the case with the Council of Trent.<sup>1</sup> But on the other hand it is a great mistake to suppose, that a doctrine is not fundamental because it is not contained in a creed. Thus Aquilas was excommunicated by the early church, on account of being addicted to astrology and the doctrine of fate: and Pope Leo, with reference to the case of the Priscillianists, represents these doctrines as subversive of Christianity and incompatible with communion. On this view, the contrary doctrines must be fundamental; nor will it avail to prove the contrary, if you allege, as you truly may, that these latter doctrines are not put forth in the creeds of the Church. The same may be said respecting that doctrine which declares the original sinfulness of man's nature: if, as St. Augustine has argued, the error of Pelagius is one, which destroys the faith of Christianity; it will therefore follow, that the contrary doctrine is, and always was, a fundamental truth; though the formal statements of it were not put forth till the error was introduced, and though there be not, even now, any formal article upon that subject in our creeds. The proper use of creeds, requires that they should be commensurate, not with the full extent of fundamental truths, but with the need of security to the Church: and the greatest possible brevity and simplicity, which may suffice for this purpose, is the most desirable

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<sup>1</sup> Sess. xiii. Can. 2.



In the discussion of this subject, I have made a remark, on which, perhaps, a few words of defence would not be ill bestowed. For the language may appear too dogmatical: and it may be thought, that I have thus incurred the common infelicity of controversial writers, in flying from one extreme of error into another. The position to which I refer is that, in which I have said, *that the body of doctrine, ORIGINALLY AND DESIGNEDLY POSITIVE, is to be found in Holy Writ and nowhere else.* As to the import of the exclusive clause, the amount of my meaning is this: that it is *not* to be found in any Creeds or Church formularies, of which I have undertaken the defence, or which *ought* to be defended. This, I fear, may shock the feelings of some, who, with relation to these formularies, cling pertinaciously to the notion, of their being summaries and abridgments of the faith, framed as a vehicle of Christian instruction. My assertion, however, is not so strong as the Council of Chalcedon: the truth of my position will be an unavoidable consequence of admitting theirs: and be it considered, that this is a testimony, which, in relation to the present subject, will hardly be accused of defect, as to judgment, knowledge, and authority. It is thus that, in their address<sup>k</sup> to the Emperor Marcian, the Chalcedonian fathers express themselves in defence of that definition of the faith, which had been drawn up by

<sup>k</sup> This document appears to me, in its relation to the subject of the present treatise, the most important and instructive of any, which I have found among the records of antiquity. With respect to the evidence here produced from it, I regret that it did not occur to my research, in time for an earlier and more prominent allegation.



Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome, against the heretic Eutyches. "He who, of his own accord, without an adversary to resist, and in *words of his own choosing*, ambitiously<sup>1</sup> frames an exposition [of the faith]; that man may justly be considered as a man of presumption:<sup>m</sup> whereas he who, in resistance of evil-minded persons, adapts his own language to the excogitation of the adverse party, [may with equal justice be considered as] endeavouring, by *words of truth*, to dissipate their pernicious doctrines."<sup>n</sup> The Council of Chalcedon was held in the year 451, and is otherwise known as the Fourth General Council; its decrees relating to doctrine, and its canons of Church government, have been received by the Universal Church.

There may probably be some of my readers, to whom explanation may be desirable, relating to a point in the foregoing matter of this chapter. The Apostles' Creed, as it has been seen, was regarded both by Chillingworth, and by the University of Paris, as being undoubtedly what its name imports: but the contrary of this is, in later times, regarded as an unquestionable truth. Now this circumstance may have the unhappy effect, of putting a stumbling-block in the path of well-intentioned persons.

<sup>1</sup> The idea, here intended, is probably that of seeking distinction as a leader of a sect, or a founder of doctrine.

<sup>m</sup> The word *impostor* might perhaps not be too strong for the Greek αλαζων.

<sup>n</sup> 'Ο μὲν γὰρ ἐξ οικείας γνώμης, ουδενος μαχομένου, τοῖς αὐτοῦ ῥήμασι

φιλοτιμουμενος εκθεσιν, οὗτος ὡς αλαζων ἀν εικοτῶς ἀλίσκοιτο· ὁ δὲ τοῖς κακῶς φρονεῖν ἐγνωκοσι μαχομενος, τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἐπινοίᾳ προσαρμοζει τὴν γλῶτταν, τὰ παρ' ἐκείνων κακῶς ἐπαγομενα τοῖς τῆς ἀληθείας διαλυεῖν πειρωμενος.—Mansi's Concilia, tom. 7, page 465.



It may look, as if important principles of religious knowledge were involved in all the uncertainties of scepticism, and decided, by whim and fancy, one way or the other, according to mere variations of gratuitous dogmatism. But it is to be considered, that during the long ages of darkness and ignorance, there had arisen a vast multitude of errors, relating to the authors of books and documents; and that these errors were regarded, even by wise and learned men, without suspicion; till times arose, of more extended knowledge and enquiry, when, by evidence previously unknown, they were readily discovered: in consequence of which, such errors have been undoubtingly and unanimously rejected. The mistake relating to this creed, is one of such cases. There is no doubt, that both the Paris theologians and Mr. Chillingworth would have been quite as positive on the other side of the question, as they were unsuspecting of the mistake they had taken up; if they had lived subsequently to the time, when the evidence, by which such points are determined, had become generally diffused.



## CHAPTER IV.

IT IS A GREAT MISTAKE TO SUPPOSE, RESPECTING ANY DOCTRINE, THAT BECAUSE IT IS NOT FORMALLY CONDEMNED IN ANY CREED OR ECCLESIASTICAL FORMULARY, THEREFORE IT IS NOT A HERESY.

**T**HERE sometimes exists, I believe, a disposition to think, that a religious doctrine is not liable to condemnation, so long as it violates no established decrees and formularies. It is not uncommon, thus to appeal to the Thirty-nine Articles of religion; as if the appellant, being tried by this standard, were subject to no imputation of unsound teaching. But this is a manifest error. For, with regard to all those decisions relating to the faith, which, from time to time, the Church has pronounced; if we restrict ourselves to those, of which we know the history, and which are comprehended in the present vindication; it is certain, that their existence has been occasioned, only by the previous appearance of some heresy, which, as being incompatible with the faith of salvation, the Church



was therefore bound to remove from its communion. Thus, the impious doctrine of Arius would have been no less heretical, before the Council of Nice, than afterwards; when, by the voice of the Church, it had been pronounced such. The same was the case with all subsequent heresies. Our creeds contain the promulgation of an ecclesiastical judgment relating to them: but such judgment would never have been pronounced, had it not been called forth by some anterior necessity. The present, therefore, is not one of those cases, in which it may be argued, that where there is no law, there is no transgression: for it is not the function of the Church to make the law, which is already made and deposited in the Word of God; but to expound that law, and to apply it. It is not the essential character of heresy, that it is contrary to creeds and canons; but that it involves an error, contrary to Holy Writ, and destructive of salvation. It is a great misconception to think, that the obligations of Christianity require nothing further, than a conformity to the Church's recorded judgments: they require obedience to the Word of God.

It is possible that there may be an affected singularity, and a vain display of disputatious power, which, by introducing religious novelties, may seek to establish the fame of genius and to gather the fruits of reputation. While exercising the utmost caution against imputing motives; the state of the world still forces us to contemplate, the possible existence of this unhealthy appetite. Under the influence of such a distemper, a man may be prompted to broach very wild and shocking opinions: after



which, when he has put a stumbling-block in the way of his neighbour's salvation, and given unspeakable offence to pious ears: he may, perhaps, exultingly triumph in the assertion, that all this contains nothing contrary to the Articles of the Church; not unwilling perhaps, that you should the more admire the splendour of talents, which could make so great a figure, without removing any sacred landmarks, placed by the Church upon the broad and open fields of theology. It is highly necessary, that such bold theologians should be kept under restraint, by that obvious consideration, on which I have now insisted; that they should not imagine, that every thing is allowable, which the Church has not in formal terms forbidden; and that they should learn, that the legitimate judgments of ecclesiastical authority, are alike applicable to every extravagance of doctrine, whether old or new, which may either convulse, or undermine, the primitive and unalterable faith, as recorded in holy Scripture, and professed in the first ages of the Church.

It would not be difficult to imagine certain theological tenets, which might be quite contrary to the whole purpose of Christianity, and yet not confronted by any one of the existing Articles of the Church. Let it not be thought, that such doctrine is therefore safe and allowable. The teachers of such foolery may be reminded, that the time was, when Arius and Nestorius were, as they are now; the teachers of folly, which had never, till their time, received any formal condemnation of authority; and that, as heresy was not, in these former cases, exempt from control, so neither ought it in their



own case. I would suggest this also to those, who, while they would not pass the fixed boundaries of doctrine, will nevertheless go as near to them as possible: there are boundaries which the Church may have not yet marked out, but which it is fully competent, when need shall be, to vindicate. In the present state of the world, there are opinions current, which are quite destructive of a Christian faith, and quite repugnant to the only doctrine, by which men can be saved: and these opinions may happen to be maintained by men, whom we might consider, to be carefully observant of the exterior decencies of the Christian character. I speak of certain tenets, relating to matters of social morality: a point, which is now seldom tested by the rule of orthodoxy, but which, in its own nature, as properly falls under ecclesiastical cognizance, as any errors, relating to the Divine Nature, or to other sublime mysteries. Among these I may specify, the approbation which is given to a worldly emulation, and the praise of an appetite for secular greatness and distinction. These motives are spoken of and employed as the impulses of virtue: though it is very certain that they are such, as Christianity entirely condemns. There are other maxims of false morality, which are not only contradictory to Christianity, but also destructive of the Christian character. They are so far from being condemned for their vile and pernicious quality, that they too frequently obtain the public praise and approbation of Divines: thus realizing the essential character of heresy, which is to pass off, under the name of Christianity, such doctrines as are con-



tradictory to it. I do not now pursue this subject further. But I hope that it will be manifest from what I have said, that it is possible to maintain errors, which are quite destructive of the soul, but which have never been formally condemned; and that it is only a vain delusion to think, that all is right and safe respecting our faith, so long as we hold nothing, which is contradictory to established creeds and formularies.

There is, however, another point of profitable application, which results from the foregoing view. It is quite incumbent on the Church to provide, that there shall be no unsoundness of faith in its pastors: and it will not suffice, that vigilance, as to this duty, should be limited to points, which have been secured and prescribed. There was a time, when the Church did not exact, as a condition of receiving orders, a formal abnegation of the impiety of Arius: but there never was a time, when that impiety was not, in its own nature, as much a disqualification for the sacred ministry, as it is now. It is the duty of a bishop to provide, in cases of ordination, that the doctrine be, *in all respects*, sound and unblamable. This, I say, is an unalienable and indefeisible obligation, imposed by God, and which no human authority is competent to overrule. And it is quite plain, that where there is a sacred obligation imposed by God, there must necessarily be a lawful power of fulfilling it. If therefore the existing Articles of the Church, have become, through lapse of time, an insufficient guard against the ever varying character of religious error; it is quite needful, that every bishop, in his own province of ministration, should supply the



deficiency. These remarks are suggested by the case of a late prelate, who actually did thus exercise his unalienable power: in consequence of which, the lawfulness of his conduct was questioned, and made the subject of parliamentary complaint. Let us however consider the real merits of the case. That a bishop should ascertain the orthodoxy of ministers, to the extent of the Thirty-nine Articles; is undoubtedly incumbent upon him: because the duty is imposed by an authority, to which he owes, and to which he has promised, submission: but it is a most dangerous error of ignorance to infer, that his duty and his power go no further. He is, in all points, to guard the purity and integrity of that deposit, which has been committed to him. When we find a question of legality, relating to this point, mooted in the legislature: we have much reason to inculcate, that there are, pertaining to God and the Church, things, over which the secular authority has not, by Divine right, any competent power of control, and in regard to which, the laws of Christianity will admit of no laical coercion.



## CHAPTER V.

WHETHER AN ARTICLE OF FAITH MAY BE WITHDRAWN,  
WHEN THE CONTRARY ERROR HAS BEEN WITHDRAWN.

**I**F it be desirable to maintain the simplicity of religion; if it be our duty, as far as we can, to refrain from perplexing and encumbering the statements of its doctrine: there arises another question. May not these fences be removed, as soon as there is manifestly an end to the encroachment, or to the danger, in which they originated? When the error has quite disappeared, may you not withdraw from your creed, that article of faith, in which it is formally renounced?

The question is one, to which, considered in itself, both reason and the primitive practice will dictate an affirmative answer: while Christian prudence will, on the other hand, imperatively demand, that this liberty be not exercised without the most considerate discretion. A formal declaration, of which necessity only could justify the employment, may surely be cancelled, when the necessity has ceased: and it is obviously our duty, that we should not obstruct the faith, by needlessly propounding it in



forms of language, which, apart from explanation, are difficult, and therefore repulsive. This liberty was recognised and acted on in the primitive church. There were, in these times, various destructive errors, which it was indispensably necessary to renounce: nor was it possible to do this, otherwise than by articles of faith. When for example, it is commanded in the Apocalypse, that certain false and impure doctrines should be driven out of the fold: it is certain; that the power of the bishops, if they were obedient to the Divine precepts, must have been thus exerted. Articles of faith must have been imposed; by the rejection of which, the misbeliever would put himself out of the Church. If this be certain, it is equally so, that these specific articles against idolatry and fornication, did not, in subsequent ages, appear among the creeds of the two Churches, mentioned in the Apocalypse, of Pergamos and Thyatira. There is a creed still extant, which presents, as I think, a clear vestige of the ancient practice. It is one, which was professed at a Council of Antioch, held in the year 341: in which, after reciting other articles, we find a conclusion to this effect: "And, if it be necessary to add so much, we believe moreover in the resurrection of the flesh and the life everlasting."<sup>o</sup> It seems from this, as if articles became obsolete, when the necessity of them had passed: these two articles having been rendered necessary by the Gnostic heresy in or soon after, the apostolic age;<sup>p</sup> which heresy, at the time we speak of, had probably become so far extinct, as no longer to call for any

<sup>o</sup> Socrat. Hist. Eccl. L. ii. c. 10.

<sup>p</sup> See page 118 of this treatise.



solemn and explicit renunciation: for the doubt, here started, relates not to these verities, viewed as doctrines of the Faith, but as doctrines of the Creed; the former character being unquestioned and fundamental, but the latter being determinable by the rule of Christian edification. This general view is confirmed by bishop Bull: who supposes the Roman Creed to have been framed on the basis of that of Jerusalem, omitting, for sake of brevity, those articles, which had been inserted against heresies, formerly prevalent in the East, but almost unknown to the Western Christians.<sup>a</sup> It is to be added, that if it had not been thus, the forms of Christian profession would perhaps, in some instances, have been extended to a degree of prolixity, which, by reason of its obscure and perplexing character, would have rendered the access to Christian communion, impossible to simple and unlearned minds; that is, to the larger part of those, whom our Saviour came to redeem. And it is always to be borne in mind, that an article, thus omitted in formularies of general use, does not therefore cease to belong to the rule of faith, but is still applicable, as need may be, to any particular case.

But if we apply the consideration to the creeds of the Church of England; we shall find great reason to proceed with very cautious steps. These three creeds, in all their parts and expressions, speak to us the declared, or at least the authorised judgment, of the whole and undivided Church of Christ. So far indeed as they speak the declared words of the

<sup>a</sup> Judd. Eccl. Cath. C. VI. § 17 and 19.



Catholic Church, it may safely be said, that there is not, in the whole compass of Christian history, an example of any article being, by any particular church, omitted in a creed, which had received this unanimous sanction.

But let us extend our view to those doctrinal positions, which claim the same authority, not in regard to their formal enunciation, but their substantial truth.\* On this comprehensive view of all the verities contained in these formularies; I would maintain respecting them, that they are to us, as warning lights, erected for the safety of future ages, by those, who, in their time, were well competent, to discriminate between the tradition of old doctrine from the apostles, and the inferential novelties of heretical teachers; and in whom, embracing the whole Christian Church, the supposition of error is incompatible with just views of God's promise to his church. To rescind the judgments of this authority, would be out of the question: and to cancel the declaration of these judgments, would be full of danger. For thus should we remove one of the strongest protections against the false interpretation of Scripture: since we may be safely assured of the falsehood of any interpretation, which propounds a doctrine, contrary to such judgments, of an early, perhaps of an apostolical age. If for instance the doctrine of

\* That I may avoid the possibility of being mistaken, I would explain respecting these three creeds; that in point of *formal enunciation*, this authority can belong only to that, which is called the Nicene creed, and, even in this instance, not without an exception of three words. In regard to *substantial truth*, it is claimed for them all. Who, for instance, would deny that authority to the Apostles' creed, on the mere ground, of its never having been prescribed by a canon of the Universal Church?



Socinus were true, why was it not the doctrine of the primitive church ? That it was not, is plainly evinced by the ancient creeds : which thus speak out the language of the apostolical time, in records, alike venerable and authoritative, and which therefore we may well hope, for the edification of Christ's body, will be indelible. The falsehood of Socinian expositions may thus be proved in a way, far more cogent with wise men, and far more level to common minds, than any depth of philological or scholastic subtlety : I will add, in a way far more useful, than any grand displays of original thought or of argumentative power.

I might here insist at some length, on the danger of making a stumbling block, by giving people occasion to suppose, that you renounce all that you omit. I will however take occasion to say, that a question such as this, can only, with any conscientious member of our English Catholic Church, be considered, as a question of statement, not of truth. Whether the continued use of such statements be salutary and edifying ; not whether such statements be true ; is the only problem which can, with men pledged by their own subscriptions, be entertained without prevarication.

The true point to be aimed at, is, to impart such light and knowledge respecting these formularies, as would effectually obviate every inconvenience, which may be imagined, in the use of them. They would then be full of most edifying instruction and guidance to all Christians, and would operate as a most salutary and instructive commentary upon holy writ : by which commentary, the simple and unsophistical



mind, might, on occasions of heretical citation from Holy Writ, be enabled to say:—this is not the meaning of Scripture; for the doctrine which it teaches is one, condemned by apostolical men, who must have known what the apostles meant. To thus unfold the meaning of our creeds, is a work, which cannot be done, without a *narrative exposition* of the occasion and meaning of their terms. But it is to be observed, that very little of such instruction would be required for this purpose. How this little can conscientiously be withholden; I do not see. If the end be commanded, the lawful means thereto must be included in the command: if we are bound to teach men to understand the faith which they profess; we must also be bound to impart that knowledge, without which such understanding would be unattainable. If there be a plea set up, of the difficulty of doing this: I would reply, that the difficulty is a mere chimera; that the real difficulty consists, in allowing things, consistently with safety, to remain as they are, that is, in maintaining as forms of popular profession, certain forms which the people do not understand; and that the light thus applied, would expose the ignorance of foolish men, would lay open the real tendency of rash and destructive measures, and would dispel, from many minds, certain dubious and uneasy feelings, which often disturb the serenity of an uninstructed faith.



## CHAPTER VI.

A CONSIDERATION OF THE CASE, IN WHICH THERE ARE  
 PRESCRIBED BY THE CHURCH ARTICLES OF FAITH,  
 WHICH A MAN BELIEVES TO BE UNTRUE.

**I**T cannot, by any consistent Catholic of the English Church, be questioned; that there have, at various times, been prescribed, as terms of communion, certain articles of faith which are in themselves untrue: and this has been done by men, of competent authority to rule the Church. Among the various classes of heretics who have thus abused the power of the Keys, we may specify the Monothelites, and the modern Church of Rome. The question then arises: What is the conduct which, under such circumstances, ought to be observed by private Christians.

With regard to the view of personal duty; it may readily be conceded, that the present case is fully made out, not only if the tenet be in itself untrue, but moreover if it be such as a man conscientiously *believes* to be untrue: it may also be admitted, that the plea of such conscientious belief, is a plea,



which every human authority is bound to admit. At the same time, every recusant must beware of considering himself as a judge, from whom there lies no appeal: he must remember, that while it is not for man to overrule him, both the validity and the sincerity of his plea belong to the cognizance of his Maker, and that the words of Christ will judge him at the last day.

We will therefore proceed to a general consideration of the question; admitting, that the latter supposed case does not involve any practical distinction.

It is to be considered then, as it has been well observed, that the rulers of the Church possess no authority beyond the limits of their commission.<sup>s</sup> The apostles, and all who have succeeded to their ministry, are empowered and commanded to teach men, to observe all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded them: but their power reaches no further: and especially have they not, by virtue of this commission, any power to teach that which is *contrary* to what Christ commanded. Now this is the character of every untrue tenet of religion: it is contrary to that which Christ hath commanded. There is therefore no power to prescribe such a tenet, nor is there any obligation to embrace it.

On the contrary, it is plain that our duty lies the contrary way. The paramount obligation of truth must not be overborne by any consideration: and an act of perfidious impiety, committed for the sake of Christian communion, must at once cancel

<sup>s</sup> See Rogers on the Visible and Invisible Church, p. iii. c. 2.



all the benefit of that communion: for that communion binds a man to an entire obedience, and a total conformity, to all the laws of God. To commit a crime in order to the reception of a sacrament, must be a dreadful guilt; and the last state of that man must be worse than the first.

But is a man, under such circumstances, to submit to an exclusion from Christian communion? The case is deeply to be deplored: but there is no remedy which man is competent to apply.

It is here fit that we should be especially guarded against a certain opinion: which is indeed of very modern introduction, and far too modern to be true; but which has, nevertheless, become extensively current. It is maintained, that in case of being thus cut off from a Church of lawful constitution, necessity will justify our resorting to a ministry of human appointment. Such, according to Burnett, seems to have been a character, ascribed by Sir Thomas More to his Utopians: who, in default of priests regularly ordained, were inclined to elect priests for themselves: and this Burnett has thought proper to designate as "a largeness of thought."<sup>t</sup> But no necessity whatever can enable us to do what is impossible, or can justify our doing what is absurd.

<sup>t</sup> "The opinion, page 175, that he proposes, doubtfully indeed, but yet favourably, of the first converts to Christianity in Utopia, who (there being no priests among those who instructed them) were inclined to choose priests that should officiate among them, since they could not have any that were regularly ordained; adding,

that they seemed resolved to do it: this shows that in cases of necessity he had a largeness of thought, far from being engaged blindfold into the humours or interests of the priests of that time; to whom this must have appeared one of the most dangerous of all heresies." Burnett's Hist. of the Ref. vol. 3, page 57, Ed. 1829.



The functions of the Christian ministry are in themselves such, that nothing less than the delegation of God can render them possible. If none but God has the inherent power, there is none but he who can give that power to men ; and it is plain, that the acts of forgiving and retaining sin, cannot belong to any other power than this. Nothing more, I think, need be said, to shew the impossibility of that, which is here pretended to. Its absurdity will at once be seen, when we consider, that the case, on its own shewing, is, that of an ambassador deriving no commission from the king, whom he professes to represent, but from the people, with whom, in the name of that king, he professes to treat ; or of a covenant and treaty, in which one of the contracting parties is to authorize a representative for the other. Surely this is a very mitigated view of that enormity of supposition, by which man is regarded as constituting a competent authority, to release himself from sin, to cancel his own obligations to God, and to bestow upon himself a promise of eternal life.

It is plain then, that the sacramental administrations of such a ministry can never be valid. There may indeed be an exterior observance, and the appointed elements of a Christian sacrament may be used ; but there is still the absence of a Divine appointment : without which, there cannot, in the Christian sense of the word, be any sacrament ; there can be no authorized conveyance of pardon and life to the participant. The blessing and the grace of a sacramental ordinance can be hoped for on no other warrant, than a Divine promise : here



is no promise, and therefore no warrant. I see not how the following argument can justly be invalidated. "By altering the form of the hierarchy, the priesthood must sink and the sacraments be administered without effect."<sup>u</sup>

If the true representation of this matter stood on no other basis, than that of principles obvious to common understandings; I do not understand how its force could be evaded. And it will, under all circumstances, be our duty, on such a question, to submit our understandings to the direction of our Saviour's words.

We are thus plainly taught that there is no lawful entering into the sheepfold but by the door; that Christ himself is that door; that he who enters by that door is the shepherd of the sheep; and that whoever enters in any other way is a thief and a robber.<sup>x</sup> It thus appears, that Christ is the only fountain of pastoral authority: and it is certain, that what he himself was with respect to the appointment of pastors, that he commissioned and commanded his apostles to be; that the power thus transmitted to them was also, by the terms of the grant, transmissive to their successors. It will also plainly appear from these words of our Lord, that all, who derive not from this source of au-

<sup>u</sup> Collier's Ecclesiastical History, vol. 2, page 842. It is thus that Collier states the argument of King Charles I.: but his words are rather stronger than those of the King; as may be seen from the King's first paper to Mr. Henderson, at page 156 of his works.

<sup>x</sup> "Verily, verily, I say unto

you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. —Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." John x. 1, 2, 7.



thority, are altogether destitute of all pastoral authority whatever.

But it would be far short of doing justice to the subject, if we were to stop here. It is but little to shew only the invalidity of such ministrations: while the demands of truth and piety, require, that we should expose also the high criminality of them.

This criminality consists in usurping powers which belong only to God. It is true, indeed, that God himself can delegate these powers to man: and this consideration ought at once to silence those, who scoff at the power of binding and loosing; as if it were something absurd to suppose, that a mortal man can forgive sin. For unless it be contended, either that God has not this power, or that he cannot depute it: why is it unreasonable to admit, that he may send one guilty creature on an errand of mercy to another? But then it is certain, that none but God himself can delegate this power. It surely can be no matter of laborious proof, to substantiate, in this case, the arrogance and impiety of a human pretension. What is this but to wrest out of God's hand his supreme power and his inviolable authority?

With respect to scriptural arguments, it is common to allege instances such as those of Korah, of Dathan and Abiram, of Saul, and of Uzziah. But we may here perhaps be told; that there is no reasoning from the Levitical priesthood to the evangelical ministry. My answer is: Each of these instances is a case in point, it has a strong bearing on the present subject. The case before us is, that



of an office, to which God himself had reserved the appointment: we may therefore learn from these examples, the awful wickedness of usurping such functions. This is the common property of both the priesthood and the ministry. Nor is it denied, that the two things have a differential, as well as a common, character: but then it must be added, that the difference is such, that it makes the argument, as it relates to the Christian pastor, much more cogent and more palpable, than it is, when applied to the house of Aaron. The case of the Christian ministry is far stronger, than that of the Levitical priesthood; stronger, I say, in its inherent force, of prohibition and rebuke to the intruder. For the priest, by virtue of his office, was one, who spoke to God on behalf of man; whereas the function of the Christian Pastor is, to speak to man on behalf of God. The one is the ambassador of man to God: the other is the ambassador of God to man.<sup>y</sup> See how these matters are set forth in holy writ. “For every high priest taken from among men, is ordained FOR MEN in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins;—and no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”<sup>z</sup> Such was the priesthood of Aaron; it exercised its ministration on behalf of man, but not without the appointment of God. But with respect to the evangelical ministry, the Scripture speaks thus. “We are AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST, as though God did beseech you by us: we

<sup>y</sup> See Outram de Sacrificiis, Lib. i. cap. xix. pag. 220. Ed. 1677.

<sup>z</sup> Heb. v. 1, 4.



pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."<sup>a</sup> In the latter case, the very nature of the office is such, as to render it, apart from a Divine appointment, nugatory and unavailing: in the case of the former, the need of a Divine appointment to minister to God in behalf of men; is a truth, known only by revelation. In both cases, the common guilt of transgression is, that of usurping functions which God has reserved to his own appointment; that reservation being in both cases revealed, and in the latter, being not only revealed, (as we have seen in the foregoing discourse of our Lord,) but being also, on the strictest estimate of reason, plainly inherent in the functions themselves. For it is quite absurd to imagine, that any human election or appointment can have authority, to create a messenger of God.

It seems to me, that this view, (I mean, relating to the agreement of the two cases), has the express confirmation of Scripture. For we learn concerning the primeval heretics, that they perished in the gainsaying of Korah: now it would not be the Jewish Priesthood, but the Christian ministry, that was attacked by *their* rebellion: yet we see that both these aggressions are, in their character and enormity of guilt, identified by the words of St. Jude.<sup>b</sup>

It would be taking up a low ground, but it nevertheless presents an argument somewhat striking; if we reason thus. Was the ministry of bulls and of goats, which cannot take away sin, to be kept, by

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

<sup>b</sup> Jude 11. Whitby confirms this view of St. Jude's meaning.



an awful interdiction, sacred from all profane and unauthorized intrusion : and is the ministry of the holy eucharist, which *can* take away sin, to lie open to every one that chooses to assume it ? Why so much veneration for the emblem, so little for the substance ?

But the plea is urged, of “the necessity of the case :” and this plea ought to be carefully examined. That men should receive the sacraments of the Church is undoubtedly, where it is possible, a case of necessity : for the forfeiture of eternal life is involved in the neglect. But suppose, that such sacraments are not to be had : what course must we then take ? The case is truly deplorable : but the only necessity is, that we must suffer the privation and endure our unhappy lot. Nor is this unfortunate condition void of consolation : we are in the hands of him, who will require of us according to what we have, and not according to what we have not : the judge of all the earth will do right : he is well able to discriminate between those who refuse his mercies, and those who mourn under the want of them : it is not the unavoidable deprivation, but the contempt and refusal of sacraments, which lies exposed to his condemnation : the day will come, when his promise will reach its due effect, and when they, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, shall be filled ; this promise, I say, will be made good, as surely as ever it was pronounced. Our anxious efforts must however be exerted, to put ourselves out of such an unhappy state. The kingdom of heaven is the pearl of great price, for which every thing else must be parted



with: and a wilful alienation from sacraments, is quite impossible for a subject of this kingdom.

It may here be edifying, in more respects than one, if I point to a case upon record. An instance is not wanting of a man, deeply learned, who separated himself from a Lutheran community, and abandoned his home and his native country, for the sole purpose of being united to a real and apostolical Church. The Church of which I speak is that of this land; and the man is, the celebrated Dr. Grabe. The case of the immortal Grotius is, if memory do not betray me, of a similar nature: though it involves only a purpose, not fulfilled, but prevented by death. But if I limit myself to the former of these instances; it is an example, pregnant with admonition, of what may be done by an honest man, resolute to live consistently with the truth which he admits.

The total privation of sacraments cannot be so great a calamity, as the use of fictitious ones: for, say what you will, both the want of true sacraments, and the use of pretended ones, are in truth, equally cases of privation: the two instances differing in this, that the one is simply a misfortune, the other, a daring and presumptuous crime. You may indeed, in the latter case, observe an outward and visible form: but if the inward grace be not annexed, of what avail is it? You are still in the same state of privation that you were before. And can you think, that the inward grace and due effect will go along with unauthorized ministrations? I will never believe this, till you prove it from Scripture: and this, I am quite sure, you cannot do. But



though the obligation of proof lie on your side; I will venture to refer to one scriptural instance: it seems to me to come home to the point: but perhaps you may object to it, on the ground, already considered, of confusing the priesthood of the old law with the ministry of the new: if so, I offer it merely as an analogy. A strong pretension of necessity, for usurping the priest's office, is put forth by Saul: "*I forced myself*," says he, "and offered a burnt offering." But what is the judgment of God upon this action: "Thou hast done foolishly." Again: What was the effect of the action? Did it propitiate God? Quite the contrary: it procured no blessing, but provoked a heavy malediction.<sup>c</sup> And what can we think of a necessity for pretending to do that, which, really, it is impossible to do? Surely there must be an extreme grossness in this conception. Place before your contemplation those mercies, which God dispenses in a corporeal and visible form; the shower, the sunbeam, and the dew. Should his chastising hand withdraw these unmerited bounties, to what can we then fly? Is it not plain, that no plans or contrivances of ours could overrule *such* a necessity? And shall we think, because his spiritual mercies are unseen, that therefore our constitutions and purposes can alter the positive and declared determinations of his will? Shall we feel the one necessity, because it is palpable, and deny the other, because it is invisible?

However extensively current an error may have become, its absurdity is not thereby diminished. And, indeed, if we look to the measures and the

<sup>c</sup> 1 Sam. xiii. 11, 12, 13.



conduct, of a large portion of those, whom we find to have maintained errors relating to church-government; we shall have reason to doubt, whether such an absurdity, if looked at impartially, would not have been felt by themselves; and whether the allegation of it does not wear the complexion, of pretence rather than of sincerity. We are to consider whether, in the case of various reformers, we do not find it affording an aid and a colouring, to a large confiscation of Church property. For whereas such property would, on the obvious principles of law and justice, have remained with its proper owners, but for the plea of the impossibility of finding orthodox pastors in the true succession; it is to be considered, how far this impossibility may have been imagined, or fictitiously set forth, for the justification of sacrilege: and we are also to consider, how far the human appointment of pastors, may have been further excogitated and vindicated, in order to obviate the necessity of reinstating the just owners of alienated property; thus teaching the people contentedly to dispense with their ministrations. It would always be desirable, that there should be, in those who strongly profess religion and a zeal for reformation, an unambiguous purity of motive. St. Paul would forego his just rights, rather than the effect of his evangelical labour should be frustrated or impaired, by the suspicion of a worldly motive. It would, at the great rupture with the Church of Rome, have been highly desirable, that all the reformers should, by declining to participate in spoliation, have assimilated their conduct to that of the apostle: if



the property of the Church had lapsed for want of rightful owners, *they* ought not to have seized it. But facts are such, that it is imperative on us to bear in mind, the possibility of motive, in the framing of religious polities, and in the allegation we are now considering. This is the more necessary, when we consider, that in one portion of reformers, the same spoliation was practised, though the plea was surrendered. In Scotland, it was not pretended that there was any impossibility of having bishops without popery : there were true ministers of lawful succession who had become separated from the errors of Rome : but here it was contended, that bishops themselves were an antichristian order, contrary to God's word ; whom therefore it was the duty of the people to put down : and here the same spoliation took place, as had, in continental churches, been practised under the plea, that bishops could not be had without restoring popery.



## CHAPTER VII.

A CONSIDERATION OF THE CASE, IN WHICH THERE ARE PRESCRIBED ARTICLES OF FAITH, WHICH A MAN CANNOT UNDERSTAND.

**W**E have now to consider a different case: it embraces a vast multitude of persons, and arises, not from the free choice and spontaneous inclination, of the church, but from her unhappy necessities. The case itself, and the question arising from it, may be understood thus:—What is to be done, when people are called upon to consent to articles of faith, which they do not understand? I would instance in such examples as these: respecting which it will hardly be denied, that they are, while unexplained, beyond the reach of ordinary capacities: “Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance:” and again, “One altogether, not by confusion of Substance, but by Unity of Person.” It is, in the case under consideration, always supposed, that such articles are imposed by lawful authority. This essential consideration being taken in; the answer is, That a man



must not, by reason of his inability to understand what he reads, abandon the communion of the church. Even in this case, his submission is still due to it.

The case, if my impressions are correct, is well represented by Mr. Rogers in his Treatise on the Church.<sup>d</sup> The recusant would thus violate the general obligation of church communion: he would certainly separate himself from the church: but it is, at least, quite *uncertain* to such a person, whether the church has given him any lawful cause for so doing: in regard to that which he cannot understand, he cannot be assured, that it contains anything contrary to his belief. Meanwhile, the church, in merely prescribing that, which is to him unintelligible; has done him no wrong, and has not, in any way, surrendered its just claim of submission. For the church *must* adopt that language, which may meet the exigency of its position, and be suitable to the confronting and condemning of the heresies which may arise: and Christian pastors are not therefore exempted from this duty, because the language, thus required by necessity, may be such, as some men cannot understand. When Arius denied, that the Son was of the same substance with the Father; he introduced a dreadful blasphemy against the Son of God, and a blasphemy, quite destructive of the faith by which men are to be saved: and when the Monothelite asserted, that there was in Christ only one will and operation, he

<sup>d</sup> My own judgment of the case has indeed been framed upon a representation of his: but I am sorry that I cannot, at this moment, specify the part of his work, to which I desire to refer.



covertly, by denying the human nature of our blessed Lord, introduced a doctrine, entirely subversive of Christianity. Now it will not be said, that the souls of men were to be destroyed, rather than these errors should be suppressed: nor will it be said that if these errors *were* to be suppressed, the church was prohibited from employing the only language, which was efficient and adequate for the purpose: even though it be admitted, that such language is remote from common use and from the apprehensions of ordinary men. Thus in the case of Arius; the term *substance* was, indeed, a term of logical science, the unexplained meaning of which is usually remote from the knowledge of such, as are unversed in that science. We may add, that this has frequently been the case with those heresies, which the church has been necessitated to condemn; they have, in their formal enunciation, been couched in metaphysical and abstruse terms; and this quality has consequently and unavoidably moulded those contradictory affirmations, which were required for the protection of the truth. The proceeding of heretics has, in this respect, been quite conformable, in its effects at least, to what is spoken of by St. Paul, *the cunning craftiness whereby men lie in wait to deceive*: for we may thus, without arrogating the cognizance of motives, be at least permitted to describe the tendencies of their language. The same characteristic is portrayed in the following account of a treatise of Palamas; a noted sectarian, who troubled the Greek church in the fourteenth century: “a book,” it is said, “full of obscurity, and thus conformable to the style of



heretics, who take great pains to mystify their errors.”<sup>e</sup> And indeed the history of heresy throughout, discovers an uncommon artfulness of diction, and, in particular, a predominating love of equivocation. In the teaching of an heretical impiety, you commonly discover that lubricity of phrase, which provides the defence, of alleging an innocent meaning: so that the impiety may, in earnest, be both taught, and also imbibed by the common people, while the teacher, by ambiguity of terms, is sheltered from judgment. This is carried so far that, in some instances, vile and horrid impieties are put forth under a veil of language, which might, by untutored simplicity, be thought to indicate nothing, but the fervent raptures of a pure and extatic piety. Equivocation is indeed, the vital atmosphere of heretics. The mischief thus arising is such, as will sometimes render it necessary, in framing a definition of the faith, to prefer a term which is obscure, in order to escape one which is ambiguous.

I am anxiously desirous, that this reasoning should not be construed to reach further, than the limits of my meaning. I say then, that the obscurity of a creed is no valid ground for a breach of communion. As to the *measure* of acquiescence in such a creed: it is plain, respecting him who embraces a tenet, which he does not understand; that he does not, in so doing, pronounce the decision of his own mind *on that proposition considered in itself*: it is impossible that any man can exercise a judgment on unintelligible words: it is both ty-

<sup>e</sup> See Fleury's Ecclesiastical History, b. 96, c. 1.



rannical, and unreasonable, to demand that he should declare himself to that effect. His act is that, of a conscientious submission to the Church, and of a confidence, that the Church is right. And will you call this a blind submission to authority? In what light then do you view the obscurities of Holy Writ? You may say, that this is to equal the authority of the Church with that of God. I answer: The question is not, what is the amount of the authority; but whether that authority is competent to the present case. I maintain, on the grounds now stated, both that the authority is competent, and that the exercise of it is necessary. Neither the kingdom of God, now militant upon earth, nor the kingdoms of this world, can be administered, if no laws are to be made, till the law-giver can bring all men's understandings up to the level of his own mind, and to the comprehension of his language. I am to add, that when, in the present argument, we would weigh the amount of authority, it is that of the Universal Church: for it is this authority which we claim for the three formularies, with which we are now concerned: I am also to add, that the authority of the Church, whether Universal or Particular, when lawfully exerted, is the authority of God.

It must be admitted however, that there exists, in connexion with this subject, a danger, which it would be well to obviate. That which men do not understand, they are always liable to *misunderstand*; and the danger is, lest from this ignorance there should be a transition, to a false surmise of a meaning, which the church does not entertain; which may



be contrary to a man's conscience, and in fact positively untrue. It is impossible to know, how many have been driven away from church communion by a false interpretation of the church's meaning. I can have no doubt, that many separatists have, as the ground of their separation, nothing more than a mere misapprehension of ecclesiastical formularies. How are these wandering sheep to be brought back to the fold? How are others to be guarded against partaking in their error? It is frequently said, that the common people are no judges of these matters, and that they must take their faith upon the credit of wiser men. I will not now insist upon the falsehood, and the inconvenience, of a principle, which, in its general application, extends an indiscriminate support to all religions, whether true or false. But I will simply contend, that on this point, a deplorable mistake has been made; that there is, in truth, no such difficulty, as is pretended and supposed, of making intelligible to ordinary minds, those articles of their faith, which they do not perfectly comprehend; and that the dogmatical language of the Church, though unintelligible while unexplained, may, after explanation, be well understood by common capacities. But it must be borne in mind, that such explanation, in order to be true and valid, must be derived from history: I mean, from the history of the errors contradicted: with this light, the whole subject becomes clear even to the simple; without such elucidation, it must remain dark, even to the learned. To yield such instruction, must be the duty of every pastor. It never was the practice of the Catholic



Church in its best times, to withhold the explanation of propositions, which she required her faithful children to embrace: as may be seen, among other evidences, in the catechetical discourses of Cyril of Jerusalem; and I think I might add, in various writings of Augustine, in the exposition of the Nicene Creed by Cyril of Alexandria, and in the treatise of Chrysostome on the Christian Priesthood. This indeed is the proper remedy of the evil, with which we are now concerned: nor do I conceive that, in point of duty, the employment of it is any matter of optional discretion. For if there be strictly enjoined an end and purpose, so needful as that of Christian edification: there must certainly be a great criminality in neglecting the due means; namely, of teaching what the Church affirms in its condemnation of error.

Though it may be somewhat digressive from the professed subject of this chapter, it will not be so from the general design of this treatise; if, with more particular relation to heresy and error, I here throw in a few remarks, for the purpose of illustrating the necessity, of more generally diffusing the knowledge of ecclesiastical history.

In the writings of the primitive Church, we find a prominent endeavour to lay before Christians of every class, the fullest needful extent of historical knowledge; and this, with regard to every thing relating to the safety of the true faith, of the human soul, and of the Church: such knowledge embracing the succession of the true Church, the occasions of heresy and schism, and the causes, which led to



the introduction of articles of faith and conditions of communion. How great a change has now taken place! when such knowledge is rare, even among the learned; and when the repute of theological erudition arises, mostly, from a union with the pastoral character of mathematics, and metaphysics, and of other sciences than those, which teach the proper function of a clergyman. Yet the practice of the later time must, as I think, to unprejudiced minds, be manifestly an error. It will be plainly seen, that men cannot understand the articles of their faith, unless they understand, what can be obtained only from history, the nature of the heresies which called forth the introduction of them. The words of them have no meaning, but that which such history unfolds: while it is very possible, under a false judgment of their signification, to repudiate them, on the supposition of their involving untruths and impieties, which are utterly repugnant to their purpose. The same necessity will be evident from another consideration. It is the duty of every faithful Christian to maintain inviolate, the communion of the saints; to make no rupture in the blessed body of Christ, which is the Church; and to remember the will of his Lord, that all his followers should be one fold under one shepherd. How then can he, without historical light, know with whom he ought to communicate, and with whom not? How shall he distinguish the disrupted branch, from that which is still united to the true vine, and still derives from it life and strength? How shall he guard himself from schismatical and unlawful commu-



nion? How shall he escape the danger of separating from the communion, of those, to whom, by the love of Christ, and by his solemn command, he ought to be most closely united? How shall he be rightly informed respecting the legitimate succession and the lawful appointment, of the pastors to whom he must submit? While I thus advert to the present condition of the English Church, and to the course of education for its ministry; will it be pretended that this is an imaginary state of things? If so, tell me, how comes it to pass, that so many will still persist in speaking of the English and Irish bishops as intruders on the province of other men, and of the Romish prelates, as of men unlawfully despoiled of their just rights of succession? Why will they persist in speaking of the Church of England as having made a schism? while history would plainly unfold the true state of our relations, both to the Catholic Church and to the Church of Rome; and would plainly shew, that England made no schism; that the true succession belongs to our present bishops; that the Romish Church made the schism, and therefore has to justify it: and that the intrusion of pastors is on the part of the Romish prelates, who employ themselves in disturbing the ministry of a legitimate and authorized clergy? It cannot be lawful to withhold any knowledge, which may be required, in order to explain to men the true nature of their relations, to God and to their fellow members of the Church. We are to recollect that, in the word of God, his people are instructed, not only in their own annals, but also in those of other nations, so far as may be necessary for a due



comprehension of the Divine dispensations, and of the consequent duties of men. Nor are the facts of history alleged in scripture, confined to those of which holy writ had itself afforded a previous narrative: I mean, for example, that the New Testament refers to events which lie, chronologically, within the compass of the Old, but which are not therein recorded: and the purpose of my remarks is to shew, that we are not entitled to condemn, as needless to Christian edification, all historical evidences but such as are contained in scripture: for these are matters referred to by apostles, but not recorded by prophets: they are therefore, though not, at the time thus referred to, embraced in any previous scriptures, nevertheless recognised as edifying to the man of God. I trust that these remarks may help to evince, how needful it is to afford to every Christian, such supplies of knowledge, as may duly enlighten him on all points, which involve any obligation of duty, or which necessarily relate to the correction of error, or to the maintenance of truth: so that he should not have to seek for information, to what pastors his obedience is due; nor be ignorant, to what communion he, by the ordinance of God, truly belongs. These are points of deep interest to salvation, but on which we cannot now, in the nature of things, obtain an adequate knowledge, if we will insist upon having no ecclesiastical history beyond that point of time, at which St. Luke concludes his Acts of the Apostles.

A few words may perhaps be useful, with reference to the supposition, of a total incapacity of



mind for understanding certain definitions of the faith. It is not to be thought, that this deficiency is incompatible with the admission of that knowledge, which is necessary for salvation. The only purpose of such definitions is, security against heresy : when the mind is uninfected with any specific errors, it is not necessary, that such a mind should apprehend the proper force of antithetical and renunciative terms. And indeed, it may perhaps be reasonably maintained, that a want of apprehension in such matters is, in itself, an evidence of a faith thus uncontaminated. For example, if we consider, on the one hand, the heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches ; and on the other, the language of the church in condemnation of them : it may well be supposed of a plain man, who does not understand that language, that he never understood, nor even imagined, or heard of, those sectarian subtleties, to which it relates, and consequently, that he never *could* assent to them.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## ON DEFECTIVE CREEDS.

**M**ORAL offences, generally considered, have been classed under two heads, as Sins of Commission, and Sins of Omission. This distinction is as properly applicable to heresy, as it is to any other kind of delinquency. Thus, a creed may be, at the same time, orthodox in all that it declares, and heretical, by reason of what it suppresses. Such is the nature of what I would call, Defective Creeds. The point is so plain, that it requires no proof: but it is far from being duly attended to.

It is very possible, that a man may frame, as a description of his faith, a statement, in which every position shall be perfectly sound, and of which the whole tenour shall, seemingly, be tinged with the deepest piety. Such language may perhaps make a strong impression on unthinking minds: and some may be heard to exclaim against the unreasonableness, of raising a question, respecting the



orthodoxy of a man, who can so well express himself upon religion. But in all this it may be, that more is meant than meets the ear: the whole may be liable to the following objection. "Your creed is blameless, as far as it goes: but it is silent on the point, respecting which you are required to declare your faith. The purpose of Christian confession is to be obtained, not by silence, but by speech." Suppose, for instance, in order to ascertain the qualification of true doctrine, you apply the question: Do you look for the Resurrection of the Flesh? You are answered, with a Platonic rhapsody about the Immortality of the Soul. Meanwhile, there is a latent purpose to teach, that the disembodied spirit cannot suffer: consequently, though there be a future *state*, there can be no future *retribution*: and thus, the law of God becomes a rule without a sanction, and the great obligation of all human duty is null and void. Such declarations should be the more carefully watched, because the creed of a misbeliever will sometimes push forward into the boldest prominence, any orthodox principles, which are not denied: and the effect will be, to draw away attention from points of deficiency. Of such confessions there has been, I fear, a most undesirable multitude. As an example, I may refer to one, which was presented by Arius to the Emperor Constantine: it is quite heretical in its purpose, but perfectly unexceptionable in its ostensible character of language: the case will be well understood, if I quote the abbé Fleury, as speaking to the following effect. "With this profession Con-



stantine was satisfied. He was not however sufficiently on his guard to remark, that it did *not* contain either the word consubstantial, or any other equivalent form of speech: and that on the contrary, this term was therein rejected under the general designation of *useless words*: while the clause which it *did* contain, *of believing according to the Scriptures*, was a pretence for explaining away those terms of Holy Writ, which seemed to afford the strongest evidence of the Divinity of the Son of God.<sup>f</sup> The case of *equivocation* involves only another form of silence and defect. The objection then would be: "Your creed may be understood to mean what is right: but it may be also understood in a sense, quite consistent with the error, which you are called on to disavow." The thing required in such a case is, a form of sound words, and of words which cannot be reproved. This requirement was not sufficiently fulfilled by the Council of Trent. For there had been, in one of the Confessions of Augsburg,<sup>g</sup> an article, in which the divine right of bishops is flatly denied. Now the right purpose, in such an exigency, of theologians and of pastors, would have been, that the truth should be affirmed, as positively and as clearly as it had been denied. To this effect a decree was drawn up: but the terms of *that* decree were afterwards changed. The alteration

<sup>f</sup> Fleury's Eccl. Hist. b. xi. c. 55. most part the same, but accompanied with variations of detail:

<sup>g</sup> I say, *in one of them*, because there were several; of which the language was, I believe, for the most part the same, but accompanied with variations of detail: and I am doubtful, whether it is not one of these variations, with which I am now concerned.



was such as to neutralise the essential truth,<sup>h</sup> and to leave untouched a doctrine, which had, in the debates of the council, been elaborately maintained by the Jesuit Lainez, and which is said to have been first invented, within fifty years, by Cajetan.<sup>i</sup> According to this doctrine, there is in the world only one bishop by Divine Right, namely, the Pope, and the authority of all other bishops is but an emanation from his supreme will. The first form of a decree was understood to mean, that all the apos-

<sup>h</sup> The sixth Canon of the twenty-third Session, stands thus:—*Si quis dixerit, in ecclesia catholica non esse hierarchiam Divina ordinatione institutam, quae constat ex episcopis, presbyteris, et ministris: anathema sit.* How it came into this form, shall be explained in the ipsissima verba of Pallavacino, the celebrated champion of Rome. “Mà vi accorse loro grande arduità per canto degli Spagnuoli; i quali voleano inflessibilmente, che si dicesse, i Vescovi esser nella Chiesa per istituzione di Christo. Al che l’arcivescovo d’Otranto s’ingegnò di trovar compenso quanto bastava per decisione del certo; ponendo, che il *Grado* de Vescovi nella Gerarchia della Chiesa non è per arbitraria volontà del Pontifice. Onde fu sua invenzione, che nel sesto canone in luogo delle parole richieste dagli Spagnuoli, per istituzione di Cristo, si mettesse, per ordinazione divina: lasciando indiffinito l’incerto; cioè,

*se tale ordinazione fosse recata ad effetto da Dio immediatamente, ò mediante il suo Vicario:* Dalla qual buona opera partecipare, i Legati preser materia di commendarlo ancora, generalmente e largamente, scrivendo a Roma.” [Istoria del Concilio di Trento, Lib. xxi. c. 11.] To the declaration of Divine Right, the repugnance was, on the part of Pius IV., then Pope, and of the Italian party: and it ought to be observed, that this transaction was subsequent to the time, when that pontiff, on the arrival of the French bishops at Trent, had poured into the Council a reinforcement of Italian prelates, in order to counterbalance the French votes.

<sup>i</sup> I had at first said by *Cardinal* Cajetan; but Du Bellai, Bishop of Paris, spoke of it in the Council, as an invention produced by Cajetan, at a time when he wished to be a cardinal.



tles had their authority from the personal act and appointment of Christ, and that all lawful bishops have succeeded to that authority. The altered form was such as to involve an ambiguity ; and by this ambiguity, the doctrine of Lainez is protected. Of the mental reservation herein contained, Archbishop Laud may be considered as no bad expositor, when he unfolds the meaning of it to this effect : That Episcopacy is a matter of Divine Ordinance, *only through the medium of the Pope.*<sup>k</sup> Thus, the condemnation of error is not full and perfect : there ought to have been no reservation of silence in favour of the Pope : it was needful, under circumstances, to repudiate the doctrine of Lainez, as well as that of Luther. It may well be doubted whether Arius, or these Tridentine fathers, were more expert in the talent for equivocation. This case is not, if my impressions are correct, the only one, in which it might seem, that Popery has been the mother of Presbyterianism. In this last example, moreover, we may find an apt illustration of my distinction between a heresy of commission, such as appears in the Lutheran Divines, and of a heresy of omission, as it is exemplified in the Council of Trent.

A creed of this nature may not unfitly, accord-

<sup>k</sup> "The Roman faction will be contented, Episcopacy should be *juris Divini mediati*, by, from, and under, the Pope ; leaving him the privilege of a Spiritual Monarch over the whole church.

But these controversy writers of the Court of Rome wont allow Episcopacy to be *juris Divini immediati*." See Collier's Eccl. Hist. vol. ii., page 790. Ed. 1714.



ing to an idea suggested by Archbishop Laud,<sup>1</sup> be compared to a sunken rock. The danger of it may be the better understood from a remarkable passage in the Ecclesiastical history of Socrates: you are to observe, that his remark is prefatory to a recital, of a defective creed. I would represent his language as speaking to the following effect. "These men proceeded, in the next place, to alter the creed. In so doing, they did not, indeed, pronounce any judgment of blame on the creed of the Nicene council. Their real purpose was however, that of overthrowing and perverting the faith of the consubstantial Godhead: and the means consisted, in the convening of frequent synods, and in propounding the definition of the faith in various forms at various times; so that, by slight and gradual proceedings, they might pervert the minds of men, and thus prepare them for embracing the Arian doctrine."<sup>m</sup> It was, if my impression is correct, common with the Arians, to put forth a creed, not, like the Catholics, as an Antithesis to Heresy, but as a Summary of Faith: now respecting a creed of this nature, it will readily be seen, in case of an omission relating to the true faith of the Holy Trinity, how much such omission would be akin to a denial. For the summary would purport to be a summary, of important doctrines: while, in such summary, this doctrine would not be found: and this might naturally create an impression, that the doctrine was either not true, or not important.

<sup>1</sup> See Collier, as referred to in the last note.

<sup>m</sup> Socratis Hist. Eccl. ii. 10.



## CHAPTER IX.

A CONSIDERATION OF THE QUESTION, HOW FAR THE  
RIGHT OF CHURCH PROPERTY IS AFFECTED BY THE  
VARIATION OF CREEDS AND OF ARTICLES OF DOCTRINE.

**T**HAT great theological questions are best undertaken at the call of special exigences, which render them unavoidable, and not in the way of spontaneous philosophizing; is a sentiment, which the foregoing parts of this work may have tended to confirm. The remark may be applied to the subject, on which we are about to enter: it is, in my judgment, one which, if not forced upon us by necessity, delicacy and prudence might prompt us to avoid. The present purpose is, to enquire, how far the right of Church property is affected by those changes, which time has brought forth, in the forms of religious profession. This question is indeed, not purely theological, but of a mixed nature. It is nevertheless one, in which, without the application of true principles relating to the subject of this treatise, there is no possibility of a right prac-



tical determination ; and the case is such, that no true theory on this question can be formed, without the aid of theological principles.

The right of property arises from the appointment of the law ; and the claim to it is substantiated by making out the identity, of the claimant, and of the person for whom the law appointed it.

This appointment, as it is well known, does not always limit itself to one individual, but provides a successor : so that the son succeeds the father, and the estate, without limitation, goes down to the heirs, as long as ever the law continues unaltered, and maintains its power of protecting the owner.

Thus far the case of secular and ecclesiastical persons is quite the same : the rule of succession applies to both. Let us suppose, for instance, the See of Canterbury, to have been endowed by Ethelbert, Augustin being the then bishop : it will not be pretended, either that Ethelbert, or the law, designed to limit the benefit to Augustin : on the contrary it is certain, both that it was the purpose of the donor that there should be successors, and that the law guaranteed this purpose.

The question then arises : Who are the rightful successors to such property ? Now a question, thus relating to the endowment of ecclesiastical offices, must be decided on ecclesiastical principles. It is plainly on no other, that the character of such an office can be understood : and it is impossible, without an understanding of this character, to adjudicate the rights which belong to it. It was thus very consistent, on the part of the emperor Aurelian,



when, in a case of two claimants to an ecclesiastical property, he referred the decision to an ecclesiastical authority. For the right would depend upon principles in which he, being a Pagan, could not be conversant, and respecting which he felt it necessary, in defect of his own knowledge, to refer to the best source of competent and authentic direction. The theory of English Law is, if I rightly understand it, conformable to this precedent: it will adjudicate the endowment to the *actual* holder of the office to which it belongs: but if a question arise, whether the *actual*, be also the *rightful* owner, this it will leave for decision with the proper ecclesiastical authorities; in whom it recognises both the power and the duty, of removing disqualified persons from the office. A laical tribunal does not, in this case, any more than a pagan one, possess a competent jurisdiction: it cannot be authorized to judge of a doctrinal and ecclesiastical qualification. It must therefore be for the Common Law to determine the rights of the office, and for the rule of the Church to decide upon the quality of the official.

Let us thus proceed to consider the succession to ecclesiastical offices. It will appear, that in both the cases before us, there is a succession of rights. In the former instance, this succession is created by birth: in the latter, it arises from ordination and mission: and it is quite certain, that the endowments of the Church were meant to go along with this latter succession.

Having thus made an exposition of the theory;



it will be easy to demolish the false principles, with which the case has, of late, been embarrassed.

First, we may see, how very absurd it is to suppose, that the right to Church property is cancelled by the variation of a creed. To propound new definitions of the faith, whenever an exigency may call for it, has ever been the power and the duty of the church : it is essential to it. To declare the terms of salvation, is a leading part of the church's functions : and, as these terms relate to faith, as well as to practice, it is impossible to do this, without propounding, whenever need may be, articles of faith and decisions of doctrine. That this should involve a forfeiture of endowments; is in fact, to rob men, for fulfilling those very duties, for the furtherance of which they have been endowed. These remarks will apply only to cases, in which there is contemplated, merely that change which consists in enlarging or in varying the formal statements of the faith, not in the contradiction or abrogation of revealed truth. On this footing, to speak with reference to examples : the Nicene bishops would justly forfeit no temporalities on account of that new definition of the faith, which they made in opposition to Arius.

Secondly, let us suppose the case of creeds, in a subsequent age, which, not only in formality of statement, but also in the essential of true, vital, and fundamental doctrine, vary from that Catholic faith, which was contemplated by those who endowed the Church ; so as to teach that which is positively heretical : how, in this instance, are the rights of pastors affected in regard to their temporalities ?



In this case it must be admitted, that the right has ceased. For the right belongs to the office, and the individual, being a heretic, has no right to the office; but ought to be deposed from it by an ecclesiastical judgment. We must remember, however, that this judgment must be ecclesiastical: no other authority being competent to pronounce on that disqualification of faith, which will warrant the separation of the person from the office.

Thirdly, let us now enquire particularly, how the present state of the Church of England, is affected by these principles. We are told, with respect to the endowments of our episcopal sees, our livings, and our academical colleges, at one time, "that these were taken from the Catholics, and that they ought to be given to the Catholics again;" and at another, "that the present possessors hold only by the law of the land, and that the same law, which has fixed one destination of such property, is competent to change it to another." In opposition to such doctrine, we maintain, that the present occupiers are identical with those intended, by the donors and by the law.

It will be premised, that the identity of the actual and the lawful holder, is made entirely to depend on succession. Wherever, therefore, it shall appear, that no valid succession can be maintained; there consequently, all rights, limited by succession, must be at an end.

Let us now proceed to consider the foregoing allegations. The claim, thus set forth in favour of the Romanists, proceeds upon a palpable equivocation: an equivocation so childish and so gross, that



it would be fit only for ridicule, were it not engendered and accredited by a degree of bold and confident ignorance, which, by reason of its dangerous aspect and portentous tendency, may well excite our seriousness and alarm.

Be it admitted, without the least hesitation, that if the English clergy are not Catholics, they have no right to their tithes; and at the same time, that the heads and fellows of colleges have, on the same supposal, become divested of all right to their endowments: nay, I will make, on this head, a still larger concession: I will even admit, in favour of those English and Irish, who maintain communion with the Patriarch of Rome, that if they be Catholics, these properties ought fully, unreservedly, and without delay, to be transferred to their hands. But who *are* Catholics? I have heard of the rights of persons and the rights of things, but I never heard of the rights of names: every just administration of law, will award property, according to the essence, definition, and identity of things, and not in compliance with a misnomer. The use of the term Catholic, in its application to these sectarian persons, is just of this description. That they themselves should arrogate the name, is quite consistent: but that we should so apply it, is most absurd. It is admitted, that there has arisen a schism between us and them: the guilt of this schism lies somewhere: if it be with us, they are the Catholics, and we ought to join their party: we cannot, on any other terms, be within the pale of Christian salvation. But let us not incur the absurdity of con-



tinuing as we are; of maintaining our religion to be true, and at the same time of calling *them* Catholics. The very ingenious argument with which we are now concerned, would, if it were expressed in good English, and with due regard to legal and historical propriety, stand thus: "This property was given to Catholics; therefore it ought to be possessed by Popish Recusants." I desire to observe, respecting this designation of Popish Recusants, that it involves no purpose of disrespect or disparagement: it is strictly expressive of the facts, connected with the first separation of this schismatical party from the Catholic communion of England: it carries with it no construction of character, no colour of blame any more than of praise: it merely describes them in characters, the truth of which themselves will not deny, as adherents of the Pope, and as refusers of our religious service: lastly, it seems to be a name, which, at the beginning of the schism, they applied to themselves, and of which they were no more ashamed, than they were of being called Christians.

Let us now look at the following argument. "The English clergy have forfeited their temporalities, because these temporalities are the rightful property of Catholics: whereas they, inasmuch as they have, by separating from the Roman Communion, made a schism, have ceased to be Catholics." But they have made no schism; if, waving all construction, you look to the overt acts, by which the present schism was brought about; they are acts springing, not from them, but from the public



authority of the Roman Church. *The formal act of separation between England and Rome, was nothing else than the bull of Pope Pius V., bearing date the 25th of February, 1570.* The English neither made the schism at first, nor do they continue it now: the beginning, the continuance, and present state of that schism, all belong to the Patriarch of Rome. Thus far the Popish Recusants stand in precisely the same position with the ancient Donatists; against whom, in proof of schismatical guilt, it was argued to this effect: It was not we who went out from you, Donatus, but you who went out from us.

“But the guilt of a schism does not always rest with those who made it: because it may be, that the cause of separation was necessary and unavoidable: in this case, the name of Catholic would still adhere to those who made the separation, while it would be forfeited by the other party.” This is unquestionable: in the case of the Arians, the Nestorians, and others, when placed under the anathema of the church; the *act* of separation was not theirs, the *guilt* was. But by whom is this alleged? Is it by the Romanist? If so, I would answer: But if, on this view, you would exclude us from being Catholics, or maintain yourselves to be such, you are begging the question. The grounds of separation, whether lawful or unlawful, must be decided to be the one or the other, before the Catholic character and designation can be adjudged to either party: till this decision is made, it is quite inconsistent and absurd, that we should call you Catholics, and equally so, that you should



expect it of us.<sup>e</sup> And therefore, the determination of the claim must resolve itself into the general question, on the lawfulness of the grounds, on which you separated from the ancient Church of England. I say, *you*: because the fact is, that you separated from that Church: that Church never separated from you. And why do I speak of

<sup>e</sup> A few words may perhaps not be out of place, respecting the origin of the misapplication of this term. With respect to the term, Popish Recusant; it has already been supposed, that it was, in its first application, quite inoffensive to the Romish party. They did, however, also denominate themselves *Roman Catholics*; or rather, as I think, at the beginning of the schism, *Catholics Roman*. This last designation of Catholics Roman, excites in my mind a doubt, whether they thus intended to deny the Catholicity of the English Church. It seems to me, that the distinctive addition of the word *Roman* may have arisen from a feeling, either of courtesy or of moderation; that they may have viewed the separation of England and Rome, as a case of disputed jurisdiction, in which, though they chose their own side, they would not go so far, as to pronounce a condemnation of the other party, as of men alienated from the body of Christ: for this condemnation would necessarily have been implied by their taking the simple name of Catholic, as a name, by which to distinguish themselves from us.

The case may thus have been regarded, as resembling that of the schism of Rome and Avignon: it was not, I apprehend, in this last-named instance, the general practice of the two parties, to speak of their own side *distinctively* as Catholics, nor of the contrary side as heretics. As to the present curtailment of the name; in which the word Roman is dropped, while the simple term of Catholics is, with flagrant absurdity on *our* part, retained: I would imagine the introduction of it to have possibly arisen from one or more of these causes: First, the common tendency to abbreviate; a tendency, in this case, unrestrained by better knowledge: Secondly, the convenience of equivocation: Thirdly, the grossness of some divines, who may have viewed the matter, as involving merely a dispute about words. It is to be added, as matter of fact, that some English Divines have, *very ignorantly*, considered the word Catholic to denote *the greater number*; and have thus supposed that the Church of Rome, as being the more numerous party, had an incontestable right to the name.



the *ancient* Church of England? (I speak, be it observed, to the English Romanist.) The answer is: Because our bishops derive their succession from the introduction of Christianity among the Britons and Saxons; and yours, from a point of time, at or about the year 1685. But perhaps you will urge the case of Ireland, as one, in which your claim of restitution is more forcible. And what is the claim of succession here? Our succession has come down from the bishops who evangelized the country: yours begins in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and derives from schismatical bishops, claiming their mission from the Pope, and acting in conjunction, as it seems, with both the Pope and the King of Spain, for the purpose of fomenting rebellion in that kingdom, and of alienating the obedience of the people from their lawful pastors.<sup>f</sup> Observe how these schismatical bishops are spoken of in a contemporary writing, shortly after their first disembarkation on the shores of that island. "Is it not most evident," says the book of Homilies, "that the Bishop of Rome hath *of late* attempted, by his Irish patriarchs and bishops, sent from Rome with his bulls (whereof some were deprehen- ded), to break down the bars and hedges of the public peace in Ireland, only upon confidence easily to abuse the ignorance of the wild Irishmen?"<sup>g</sup> It is of the successors of these persons, that the present Romish hierarchy of Ireland is composed: they must have a clear right, forsooth,

<sup>f</sup> See Fleury's E. H. b. 175. cc. 4, 5.

<sup>g</sup> The sixth part of the sermon against Wilful Rebellion.



of succession to the temporalities conferred on the primitive bishops of that country.

“ But Rome is the centre of unity to the Church : and the guilt of schism essentially adheres to every separation from it.” Let us consider this plea. If Rome be the centre of unity, it must be so, either *jure divino* or *jure ecclesiastico* : that is, either by the Word of God, or by the authority of the Church. Now with regard to the Word of God ; it is certain, that this assertion is not contained in it. Nor can it in any way be *proved by* the Word of God, unless it appear to be a decree of the Church : it being confessed, that the Church would, by the authority of God’s word, be competent to enact such a rule. But if you will read the whole Canon Law from beginning to end ; you will find, what ? Beyond a doubt you will find something : namely, that the Patriarchs of Rome have plainly and frequently, during the later centuries of the Church History, arrogated this preeminence : but that they have it by the concession of the Catholic Church, that you will never find : and you are further to consider, that if it rests only on this basis, then, the Ecclesiastical Power, which made the law, has the same right to revoke it ; and that, in England, it has thus been lawfully revoked. Again : if there be a claim on the ground of Scripture, it cannot possibly be sustained, inasmuch as the very notion of Rome being the centre of unity, was never authoritatively<sup>n</sup> put forth till about the year of our Lord

<sup>n</sup> The authority is indeed but slender. It occurs at a Council, held at Augsburg in Germany, and of which an account is given which is supposed to have been in Collier’s Ecclesiastical History.



745 ; which is much too late to be true : as nothing authentic and authoritative could, at this late epoch, find its way into the true tradition of the Church. The true faith has been once for all delivered to the saints : it is not like human science, which derives augmentation from progress of time.

It was once complained, if I remember right, by a gentleman of the Romish connexion, that the law had deprived him of the bounty, which, in the foundation of All Souls College, had been designed for him, as a descendant of Archbishop Chichele. It is here, I suppose, agreed, on both sides, that the bounty was intended for Catholics and that Catholics ought still to enjoy it. This is undeniable : but here is still a begging of the ques-

This seems to have been the first claim of this authority, and to have furnished the first occasion for a recognition of it : for it is now first required by a synodical canon, that metropolitans should apply to Rome for their pall. "This canon," says Collier, "was perfectly new, and an encroachment upon the right of metropolitans." I must not, however, withhold the fact, that this doctrine, though not in the very same words, seems to be intimated by Optatus in the second book of his work against Parmenianus : but I attach little weight to it, because it occurs as a *private opinion* ; and again, if we look at the time of it, which is about the year 373, though far earlier than the other date, it is still so late, as to be quite on

the wrong side of that boundary, which separates the true tradition of the Church from the false. But there is in the words of Optatus, something so very peculiar ; that it calls for further remark. In asserting the primacy of Rome, as flowing by succession from St. Peter, he speaks of that apostle, as the *head* of the apostles : for which I do not discover, in Optatus's words, any other argument, than one grounded on the name *Cephas*. This word he plainly regards as a Greek derivative : whereas the word is not Greek, but Syriac, and denotes not a head, but a *rock*. I have stated the earliest occurrence, as far as I am aware, of this doctrine : and this also, as far as I am aware, is the only ground of argument on which, at its first in-



tion at issue. For unless it be granted, that this gentleman *is* a Catholic; his argument will not avail: the present Church of England claiming the succession, both of Catholic doctrine and of lawful pastors. But a schism has taken place. True: and how do you know that, in this schism, Chichele would have taken the same side that you have? Surely, the presumption of law would have placed him on the side of the lawful succession. By what legitimate proof can you press him into the service of the council of Trent? or make him an adherent of the pope's excommunication of Queen Elizabeth and her subjects? or bring to light his subscription to the creed of Pope Pius IV.? thus involving him in transactions, which never oc-

troductio, it rested. Now here plainly could be no tradition from the first apostles: as to all of them, Syriac was their mother-tongue, and therefore they must have known better. It seems from Bishop Beveridge, that Cardinal Betronius, (*Baronius*, I suppose, is meant) insisted, still more explicitly, on the same absurdity, as an argument for Papal supremacy. [Page 28 of Beveridge's treatise *De Linguarum Orientalium Praestantia*, Ed. 1658.] I subjoin the words of Optatus: he defies contradiction, and yet his allegations of fact may possibly be thought, and perhaps truly, to contain not one word of truth. *Negare non potes scire te, in urbe Roma Petro primo cathedram episcopalem esse collatam, in qua sederit omnium apostolorum caput Pe-*

*trus; unde et Cephas appellatus est; in qua una cathedra, unitas ab omnibus servaretur; ne cacteri apostoli singulas sibi quisque defenderent: ut jam schismaticus et peccator esset, qui contra singularem cathedram alteram collocaret.* "You cannot pretend to be ignorant, that, in the city of Rome, the episcopal chair was first allotted to Peter, and that he, being the *head* of the apostles, *for which reason he was also called Cephas*, occupied that chair: in order that, by means of that one chair, [Christian] unity might be maintained by all, and that the other apostles might not each vindicate such a chair to himself: so that henceforth, none but a wicked schismatic could set up another chair in opposition to this, the only chair [of primacy]." Lib. ii. c. 2.



curred till long after he was dead. You cannot vindicate your construction of Chichele's intention, unless you can prove, that he, in his mind and purpose, identified with Catholics, a sect, who never existed till the reign of Elizabeth : for it was in that year that first arose the sect of Popish Recusants. I speak of them thus, as a community, distinguished from other Romanists by this differential character : namely, that of withdrawing their obedience from their own legitimate pastors, and transferring it to a foreign bishop. On this view, their sect rises only to an antiquity, similar to that of the Presbyterians : both deriving their commencement from about the year 1570.

Again : when it has been asked : By what right do the colleges hold their possessions : the answer has been : "By the Law of the Land." To which I have heard this rejoinder. "Then the law which transferred from the Catholics to them, is equally competent to transfer from them to others." Let us now examine this inference. First, little need be said on the equivocation of the word Catholic : to argue thus upon the vulgar misapplication of a term, must evince either a very deplorable ignorance, or a very evil design. Secondly, there has been no transfer : they who now hold these properties, are the regular successors of them, who held them before the Reformation. Thirdly, as to the competence of the law ; the argument does not apply. The law did not create new titles, but confirm old ones ; it acknowledged these titles to be valid, in the then existing occupants ; it did not transfer, but adjudicate : now it is flagrantly absurd



to pretend, that a judge has as much right to award to one man, as to another. Such is the due construction of those statutes, which, in the reigns of Edward VI. and Elizabeth, were enacted relating to this matter.<sup>1</sup> No forfeiture had occurred in fact: and, as to actual occupation, there is tacitly and undisputingly recognised, in these enactments, a legal succession from legal predecessors, and a legal identity of character with them. Again: it is pretended, that the endowment has become void, by nonfulfilment of conditions; such, for example, as that of saying masses for the dead. But the law would determine otherwise: an estate being held upon a condition, when that condition has become illegal, it is not the estate, but the condition, which becomes void. Nor will it avail to say, that such an estate cannot be held without perjury, inasmuch as the possession cannot be had without swearing to observe illegal statutes: for requirements which have become unlawful, are no longer *statutes*; to such requirements the oath does not apply.

Let us now examine, more particularly, the character of that equivocation, with which we are here concerned. It turns upon two meanings, attached to the word *Catholic*. This term, when rightly understood, denotes, *every man, living, without heresy or schism, in the communion of the true Church*. This is the fixed and established signification, which has been in use, from the very earliest antiquity when the necessity was felt and acted upon, of dis-

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Edw. VI., c. 14. §. 19; 1 Eliz. c. 4. §. 34; and 13 Eliz. c. 29.



tinguishing, by this name, the true Christian from the heretic. The same term, in its false meaning, denotes, only *such as are in communion with the Church of Rome*: this latter meaning is quite a novelty, and involves a falsehood.

With this explanation, it is easy to fix the value of the argument, contained in the following words: "The property was given to Catholics, and therefore, it ought to be restored to Catholics." Dismiss your quibbles, and your pretension will stand thus. Do you claim as Catholics? Then your claim is null: because the present occupiers are Catholics, and occupy by rightful succession. Do you claim as Romanists? Then your claim is null: because the property was not given to Romanists. The endowments were confessedly anterior to the schism. Shew me then any one endowment of a bishopric, in which, on a contemplation of futurity, it is provided, that in case there should arise a schism between England and Rome, the temporalities should go to an adherent of Rome.

While thus reasoning, we are liable to be censured for a dispute about words. It must however be seen, on the view before us, that our dispute is something more than this. When confusion of speech, has a tendency to introduce confusion of social rights; it is high time to resist equivocation. But there are other considerations, far more weighty than any litigations of property, which create an imperative necessity of maintaining right distinctions. It may indeed be said: "The Romanists claim this designation: they call *themselves*



Catholics : why should *you* scruple to do so too ? It is more peaceable, and more respectful, to give them the name they like best."<sup>k</sup> I answer : We cannot dispense with either the word itself, or the right and restricted use of it : we cannot alter the true idea connected with it by the ancient Church : we have no other term for expressing that idea. If for this idea we will substitute another, using the same term indiscriminately : a most pernicious confusion is thus introduced, into the records of the Church ; into the mutual relations of Christians ; and into their private views of their most sacred obligations.

For instance : you tell the Romanist, that he is a Catholic. Now he well knows, that if, in sincerity of faith, he is so ; he is in the very best state, which

<sup>k</sup> On this subject, the following expostulation is, by the late Rev. Joseph Berington, addressed to Mrs. Hannah More : " When again you censure our doctrines, have the goodness to drop the insulting words, *Papist, Popery, Romanist*, fit only for the Bishop of Durham and Dr. —. They are no longer admitted *dans la bonne société*." Now this might be all very well, on a question of drawing-room propriety : but the present case is properly determinable, not by the code of Lord Chesterfield, but *only* by that of the Ecclesiastical Canons. In reply, *I* would thus expostulate : " You claim your term, *as a point of good manners*, and you use the concession, *for the subversion of the English Church*. Of this concession, if carried out into its due consequences, it is comparatively a trifling evil, that it would deprive the real Catholic of his property : the great evil is this. By giving you this name, as a name of distinction between you and me, it is, according to the right use of language, obviously implied, that I confess myself a *heretic* : and this confession would involve in it a dreadful blasphemy against that Catholic Doctrine which I maintain, and against that Communion of Saints, from which *you* have separated, but *I* have not." [See Roberts's *Memoirs of Hannah More*, vol. iii., page 278. Ed. 1834.]



is possible on this side of heaven: and he can be little disposed to doubt of a fact, which is admitted even by an adversary. Why then should he conform to that Church, to which in truth his obedience is due? He can, as a consequence of your own admission, make no change which will not be for the worse. As to the members of your own communion; you place a most dangerous stumbling block in their way. If they know, that none but Catholics can be members of the true Church; and if moreover, they acquiesce in your preposterous and inconsistent nomenclature: they must feel it their duty to unite themselves to Rome. As to the Church of England; you place that in a position, which is at once false; injurious to the sacred truth of which it is a keeper; and perilously seductive to the souls of men. For it is not in any insulated and independent character of *its own*, that its authority consists, but in its being *a part of the Catholic Church*. You thus moreover, to all appearance, annihilate its union with the catholic doctrine of the primitive Church, and with the catholic pastors from whom it derives its succession. For this union cannot be denoted, consistently with a *wrong* application of the term catholic: and its *right* application has been fixed by unchangeable precedents and authority, so as not to be capable, on our part, of any modification, which shall not engender the most fatal delusion. It is thus that the term was, in former ages, distinctly and unequivocally applied, long before the Roman pretension to it was advanced. The history of the Church can neither dispense with the term, nor permit the misapplica-



tion of it. I will only add, respecting this perversion of language, that the evil consequences of it are so great and tremendous, as peremptorily to demand an effectual counteraction; which cannot, as I think, be otherwise provided, than by propagating better instruction through the whole mass of the English Church. It is not for me, but for the competent authority, to determine the mode of doing this: but I would humbly submit, whether it might not be effected, by a short addition to the Church catechism, or by a homily, which, for this and other uses, might be periodically read in churches.

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It has occurred to me, that the foregoing representation would at once be rendered more distinctly intelligible, and be better substantiated, by annexing to it the two following documents.

The first is, the Bull of Pope Pius V against Queen Elizabeth. This is to be considered as the *formal act, which created the present separation of the Church of England from the Church of Rome.* The reader will view it, as it regards both Elizabeth and her subjects, with reference to these questions: first, Who made the schism? Secondly, Are the allegations true? Thirdly, were the grounds of excommunication valid, according to Scripture and to the canons of the Church? The popish controversy has been extended over many large volumes. But if the question, like any issue in law, be thus confined to a strict examination, *as to the facts and the law of the case*; it will possibly be found to involve less difficulty, than many litigations in courts of justice, such as are frequently determined, in a



very satisfactory way, by a verdict from men of quite ordinary qualifications.

The second document is a narrative, which I have abbreviated for better adaptation to the present use, but in which I have made no departure from the exact words, of the author, but such as was subservient to the same adaptation. The work of which I thus avail myself is, a "Compendious Ecclesiastical History," by the Rev. William Palmer of Worcester College, Oxford. This, besides the respect which would justly accrue to it from so eminent a theological name, is the more valuable, by reason of the author's peculiar qualification for treating of matters (with which we are partly concerned), relating to the Irish Church. The principal design of this narrative is, to place events distinctly in their true historical light with reference to the order of time, and the true relation in which they stand to each other.

I.

"Pius Bishop, Servant to the Servants of God, for a perpetual memorial of the matter.

"He that reigns above, to whom all power in heaven and in earth is given, has consigned his one holy Catholic Church, out of which there is no salvation, to the sole government of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and his successor the Bishop of Rome. This successor he has constituted supreme over all nations and kingdoms *to root out, and to pull down, to destroy, to build and to plant*; <sup>1</sup> to the end, that the faithful being incorporated by mutual charity, may be preserved in the unity of the spirit, and presented unblemished and acceptable to their Saviour.

"The goodness of God having pleased to set us at the helm, and intrust us with the presidency in his Church, we have omitted no opportunities, but exerted ourselves to the utmost that unity and Catholic religion might be inviolably maintained, which God for the trial of integrity, and for the punishment of misbehaviour,

[<sup>1</sup> Jer. i. 10.]



has suffered to labour under so great a calamity. But now the ungodly are grown up to such a degree of power, that there is no part of Christendom in which they have not endeavoured to scatter their infection and poison with their heterodoxies; that vassal of iniquity, the pretended Queen Elizabeth of England, being particularly active, and affording shelter and sanctuary to the most criminal of this kind. This woman having seized the crown, and by a monstrous usurpation challenging the authority and jurisdiction of supreme head of the Church of England, has brought the kingdom, lately recovered to the Catholic faith, to a lamentable destruction.

“For having by force prohibited the profession of the true religion, (formerly suppressed by that revolter King Henry the VIIIth, and with the assistance of this See, restored by the lawful Queen Mary, of famous memory); she has given in to the misbelief of the heretics, dismissed the nobility from the Council Board, and furnishing it with obscure heretics, has discountenanced the Catholics, and restored the scandalous preachers and ministers of iniquity to their former post. The sacrifice of the mass, the stated prayers and fasts, the distinctions of diet, celibacy, and other Catholic ceremonies, are thrown out of use. And instead of these, she has ordered books containing downright heresy, to be publicly recommended to the kingdom, and commanded her subjects to comply with ungodly mysteries, practised by herself upon Calvin’s directions. She has farther presumed to deprive the Bishops, Rectors of Churches, and other Catholic priests of their churches and benefices, and barred them the exercise of their function, disposed of their preferments to heretics, undertaken the cognizance of ecclesiastical causes, forbid the prelates, clergy, and laity, to acknowledge the Church of Rome, or to obey the precepts and canonical sanctions of that communion, brought a great many to a compliance with her scandalous laws, to a renunciation of the Bishop of Rome, to forswear all obedience to him, and, by the same solemn engagement of an oath, to acknowledge her sole sovereign, both in temporal and spiritual matters: executing the penalties of her statutes upon those who continue in the unity of the Catholic faith, pay their customary obedience to us, and refuse to submit to her commands: to which may be added her imprisoning the Catholic bishops and priests: in which durance, a great many, after along hardship, have ended their days.

“All these things being so notorious all over Europe, and proved by so much unquestionable evidence, as not to admit of any excuse, apology, or colour of evasion: considering wicked and intolerable practice has been multiplied to so many instances, that the persecution of the faithful grows worse and worse, and the batteries are



played with more force upon religion, and all by the means and instigation of the said Elizabeth; considering her mind is so far hardened, as not only to despise the wholesome advice and solicitations of Catholic princes, for her conversion, but likewise to refuse admitting the Nuncio sent to her from this See: these things considered, we are constrained to have recourse to the arms of justice, being extremely troubled at the necessity of such an application; and that we should be driven to the use of rugged expedients against one, whose ancestors have been so serviceable to the interest of Christianity.

“In virtue therefore of his authority, who has been pleased to advance us to the supreme seat of justice, though underproportioned to support so great a weight; we out of the plenitude of our apostolical authority, declare the aforesaid Elizabeth an heretic, and an encourager of heretics; and that those who adhere to her in the practices above-mentioned, lie under the judgment of an anathema, and are cut off from the unity of the body of Christ. We likewise declare the said Elizabeth deprived of the pretended right to the kingdom above-mentioned, and of all dominion, dignity, and privilege whatsoever: we likewise declare all the nobility and subjects of the said realm, who have sworn to her in any manner whatsoever, to be for ever absolved from such an oath, and from all obligation of fidelity and allegiance; and by virtue of these presents we actually absolve them, and deprive the said Elizabeth of the pretended right to the crown, and all other pre-eminencies and privileges above-mentioned. We likewise command all the nobility, subjects, and others above-mentioned, that they do not presume to obey her orders, commands, or laws for the future: and those who act otherwise, are involved in the same sentence of excommunication.

“And because the conveying of this original instrument to all places requisite, may be impracticable; our pleasure is, that a transcript attested by a public notary, and sealed with the seal of a prelate, or that of his court, shall have the same credit every where, both judicially and extra-judicially, as if the original itself was exhibited. Dated at Rome, at St. Peter's, in the year of the incarnation of our Lord, one thousand five hundred and seventy, on the 25th day of February, and in the fifth year of our Pontificate.”<sup>m</sup>

<sup>m</sup> The translation of this document is, for the most part, that of Collier in his Ecclesiastical History. Collier translates from the copy given by Sanders in his

Work de Schismate Anglicano. I have compared Collier's translation with Bullarium, and have made some alterations.



## II.

“The accession of the illustrious Queen Elizabeth was followed by the restoration of the Church to its former state.

“In 1562, the synod or convocation of England published a formulary of doctrine, divided into thirty-nine articles, in which the doctrines of the Catholic faith were briefly stated, and various errors and superstitions of the Romanists and others were rejected. This formulary was again approved by the convocation in 1751, and ordered to be subscribed by all the clergy. *There was no schism for many years in England: all the people worshipped in the same churches, and acknowledged the same pastors.*

“The pope was much annoyed at the proceedings in England; he took no decided steps, however, for some time. At last, in 1569, Pius V. issued a bull, in which he excommunicated Queen Elizabeth and her supporters, and absolved her subjects from their oaths of allegiance. **THIS BULL CAUSED THE SCHISM IN ENGLAND;** for the popish party, which had continued in communion with the Church of England up to that time, during the eleven past years of Elizabeth's reign, now began to separate themselves. Bedingfield, Cornwallis, and Silyarde, were the first popish recusants; and the date of the Romanists in England, as a distinct sect or community, may be fixed in the year 1570. This separation was also fomented by priests and Jesuits, who were sent from abroad to pervert the people: but they did not succeed to any great extent. It may be here added, that with the exception of about six years, when a titular bishop sent by the pope resided in England, the Romanists had no bishops till 1685. The same year which witnessed the separation of the Romanists, was also the commencement of the Puritan separation.

“I have already noticed the early independence of the Church of Ireland, *which continued from the time of St. Patrick, in the fifth century, till the twelfth century, when a papal legate was appointed in Ireland, and the archbishops of Ireland for the first time received the pall from Rome in 1152.* This Church shared the fate of others; it became affected with the prevalent superstitions. Henry VIII. caused the papal jurisdiction to be abolished in 1537 by the parliament. The bishops and clergy generally assented, and several reforms took place during this and the next reign. In the reign of Mary, five of the bishops favourable to the Reformation were irregularly expelled from their sees; and the laws made against the pope were repealed. When Elizabeth succeeded, the former laws were revived, the papal power again rejected, and the royal supremacy and the English ritual again introduced. These regulations were approved by seventeen out of nineteen Irish bishops in the parliament of 1560, and by the rest of the bishops and clergy, who took the oath of su-



premacv, and remained in the possession of their benefices. The people also generally acquiesced, and continued to attend on divine service for several years. Two bishops only, out of about twenty-six, refused to acquiesce in the Reformation, and were driven from their sees, into which they had been intruded in the time of Mary, while the rightful bishops were still living. It may be here added that in 1615 the Church of Ireland framed a formulary closely resembling the Articles of the Church of England ; which last, however, were adopted as the confession of the Church of Ireland in the Synod of Dublin, 1634, where also a body of canons were enacted.

“The pope, of course, regarded these proceedings as highly sinful ; and considering the Church of Ireland as schismatical, he resolved to induce the people to separate from it. Accordingly, he ordained Creagh, who had shown some diligence in exhorting the people to forsake the obedience of their bishops and the service of the Church, to the archbishopric of Armagh, although that see was already filled by the legitimate primate Loftus. Creagh, who is styled by the Romish historians, “the principal propagator or restorer of the Catholic faith in Ireland,” came over and perverted some of the people. The pope sent some other emissaries, and, in conjunction with the King of Spain, to whom he had given the dominions of Queen Elizabeth, excited the Irish chieftains and people to insurrection. In consequence, Ireland became the scene of war for thirty years, in which the bishops, Jesuits, and other priests *sent by the pope*, took a most active and leading part. In this war, numbers of the ignorant and savage people were exposed to the arts of the popish emissaries ; and persuaded or forced to forsake the Church, in order to show their hostility to the queen.”



## CHAPTER X.

ON THE INTERPOSITION OF THE SECULAR POWER IN  
RELATION TO THE SUBJECT OF THIS TREATISE.

**I**T is, I think, upon record, as an encomium of Philip de Comines, that he understood how to combine politics with religion, so as never to do the slightest injury to the latter. If the praise be due, it may afford a proof of uncommon wisdom and merit : for, during the whole period since Christianity first became allied to the civil power, there are in history few things more rare of occurrence, than an example of correct sentiment on this matter.

It would be easy to carry out this subject to a great extent : and it would be far from useless to afford to it, the benefit of copious discussion. But it has, in this treatise, only a subordinate character : my strictures will therefore be limited, to a few practical questions, which have, by the circumstances of the present age, been rendered more peculiarly important. These questions I shall en-



deavour very briefly to decide, by a reference to simple and primary definitions, and to first principles of obvious truth and application.

First then, it comes to be considered : Whether the State has any power to impose an article of faith or of doctrine ? It is certain that it has not. For it never received this power from God, either directly by express communication, nor indirectly, as being transmitted by those duly empowered. It is certain then, that it cannot have this power : there being no other lawful way, by which such power can have been obtained. It will therefore follow, that the fixing of terms of communion, and the prescribing of doctrinal qualifications for the evangelical ministry ; are, both of them, functions quite remote from the proper department of the civil magistrate. It will in like manner follow, that the State has no right to interfere with these functions, when exercised by persons duly authorized : for these persons act under a responsibility to Him who empowered them : the secular power must not interfere with this responsibility, nor attempt to narrow, either the commission which God has given, or the obligation which he has imposed. We may consider the following as examples of the numerous infractions of this principle.

First, I would mention the Emperor Constantine, when he requires Alexander Bishop of Constantinople, to receive Arius into communion : and again when, by a still greater stretch of regal prerogative, he commands Athanasius, under pain of deposition and exile, to admit into the fold of the



church, *all who might desire it*. This latter, I fear, is not the only instance, in which great seeming liberality is coupled, with a most tyrannical domination over the conscience. The case of his son Constantius is still more remarkable, as having, on occasion of a similar requirement, addressed to Hosius Bishop of Cordova, drawn forth a memorable expostulation. Of a part of this remonstrance, I would thus exhibit the general tenour. “Refrain, I pray you, from your deeds of violence, and remember that you are a mortal man. Have an awful regard to the day of judgment. Presume not to violate the province of the church. Pretend not to impose upon us your commands, on matters, respecting which it is your duty, to take your instructions from us. God has given the empire to you, and has confided the church to us. As, on the part of your subjects, it would be a resistance of the ordinance of God, to rebel against your power: do you, on your part, consider, with fear, the great guilt you will incur, if you usurp that power which belongs to us. It is written, Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s: it is not therefore lawful, either for us to have dominion on the earth, or for you to minister in holy things. These admonitions are prompted by my anxiety for your salvation.”<sup>o</sup> Lastly, we may notice, among cases of this description, that requirement of a statute of Hen. VIII.; by which bishops would incur the heavy penalty of a premunire, if they should refuse to ordain, as bishop, a nominee of the civil

<sup>o</sup> See Fleury’s Eccles. Hist. b. 11. cc. 58 and 40; and b. 13. c. 22.



power; they being thus, by the law of man, restrained from that judgment of life and doctrine, which, at the peril of their souls, they are required to exert.

The second question is : Whether, in fixing the qualification for civil offices, the state has any right, of having regard to articles of faith and of doctrine. In answer I say : Undoubtedly it has. The acts of the state are to be considered, merely as the acts of so many individuals who compose the state : and certainly it is fully competent to every private man, to fix his own standard of qualification for his own servants. If such a man shall expect more fidelity, in a Christian than in an infidel ; he has an undoubted right to give his preference accordingly. If again, he shall prefer the real faith of a Christian to the mere denomination of a Christian faith ; he has, in this case also, the same liberty of determination. Then, you are to recollect, that a Christian cannot be distinguished from an infidel, without the intervention of a creed ; nor a real Christian from a hypocrite and a misbeliever, without the intervention of articles of faith. Again : with respect to both articles of faith and of doctrine, we may consider the *testimony* of the Church to be afforded to that man, who satisfies all the requirements of the Church. Now if, in estimating the competence of men for their duties, it is lawful to be guided by testimony ; it would certainly involve a flagrant absurdity, to say, that the testimony of the Church was the only one that was inadmissible ; or that men's religious principles were a point of qualifi-



cation, which had no relation whatever to the probabilities of their good or ill behaviour.

This last question may indeed, very properly, be carried to a further extent. For it may be inquired, Whether the state is ever under an *obligation* to do this? and I do not see, how this question can be truly answered in the negative. The acts of the state are, as I have already said, to be considered in this case as the acts of so many individuals; and the case supposed is that, of such individuals being orthodox and Catholic Christians: now it is clear, respecting such individuals, that they have a right, to use their own judgment in the choice of their own officers; that they have a right, to make provision for their own security in the profession of religion; they have a right, to read history, and to profit by any instruction it may afford them, of the injustice and cruelty with which true religion has been affected, in consequence of political power being entrusted to infidels and heterodox men. That which, with respect to themselves, is a right, is, with respect to other men a duty: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. It is also a duty, with respect to our religion. Christianity must not be deprived of any protection, which, consistently with its own merciful and charitable precepts, can be obtained for it. This duty is the more manifest from the following consideration. The power of the Church is an emanation from the ordinance of God, and it is a power, paramount, *in its lawful exercise*, to all human legislation. But it must ever be remembered, respecting such lawful exercise, that this power is not accompanied with any right



of coercive force : it is quite dormant over every conscience, which does not acknowledge it. Thus, for example, the Catholic Church had, in the reign of Severus, the same right to the subjection of mankind, which it had in the reign of Constantine : nevertheless, there was no pretension of right to the enforcement of this subjection, but on the contrary, a patient endurance, grounded on religious duty, of most unrighteous and cruel oppression : and this at a time, when, according to Tertullian, the Christians, with respect to strength and numbers, were sufficiently powerful to overthrow the Roman government ; and at a time also, when the empire, thus submitted to, was that of pagans and idolaters. The same point may be illustrated from the *ordinances* of the ecclesiastical power : which have always, for the very purpose, as it seems, of disowning coercive power, been designated as Canons or Rules, not as Laws : the difference being this, that the Laws have their power of secular coercion, but the Canons have not ; being, agreeably to their name, merely Rules of Conduct, deriving obligation only from conscience, and not from the fear of man.<sup>p</sup> In this state of things, it must obviously be a conscientious duty, in the moulding of civil governments, not to invest legislative and judicial authority in such hands, as may bring into action a power, paramount in strength, to that which is paramount in right. Conformably to this view we find in history, an early law of disqualifi-

<sup>p</sup> This representation, relating to which I cannot now indicate, in the Canons of the Church, was, Burnett's History of the Reformation. I think, suggested by a passage



cation for civil offices: it occurs about the year 523, and in the reign of the Emperor Justin I.: the reason of the enactment being, a dictate of caution, not unwarranted by painful experience; "in order that the Christians, and especially the bishops, might not be harassed by Jewish and pagan officials."<sup>q</sup> We may therefore consider it as a *general* rule, that the donation of legislative power to men of unsound faith, is no matter of wise, or even of lawful, concesssion.

At the same time, this is claimed only as a *general* principle. It is difficult indeed to lay down rules on such subjects, without soon finding ourselves embarrassed by them. For the case may arise of a false professor, outwardly, a member of the visible church, but having perhaps in reality no religion at all; who therefore will feel no difficulty whatever, in complying with any religious tests, or in subscribing to any articles of doctrine, that you may propound to him: to him it will be no painful task to surrender every political safeguard of religion; nay, he may perhaps make a merit, on the score of charity and liberal feeling, of giving away that, for which he does not care. This is nothing better, to use a phrase of Horsley, than an infidel in masquerade. Now should there arise a necessity for choosing between two persons; it may reasonably be thought of such a man, that he will probably do more harm to Christianity, than many of those dissenters, whom, in the application of our general rule, we consider disqualified for political confidence. And moreover, with

<sup>q</sup> See Fleury's Eccles. Hist. b. 31, c. 59.



regard to this latter class, it must be owned, that their error may be that of infirmity, unaccompanied by wilfulness or malice: it must be owned, with respect, that there are those among them, who, while restrained by principle from assenting to certain theological propositions, are not in like manner restrained, from aiding the moral influence of a national church, and who will therefore readily afford to that Church, a conscientious support. We see then, both, what is our general duty, and what are the circumstances which may either allow or require a modification of it.

My next question is: Whether Universities, being laical institutions, are not, with respect to religious tenets, subject to the regulation of the civil power. There are many, who would peremptorily demand an affirmative answer: it is however conceived, that this demand is grounded on a mistake, relating to the origin and legitimate purpose of such corporations; and it is also hoped, that a right contemplation of facts will lead to a contrary determination.

The true character of universities will best be understood, by a regard to the peculiar work which is appointed for them to do: this is nothing else, than to act, by delegation of the bishops, in the training and instruction of the future clergy. To discharge, or at least to superintend, this function; was considered, in the primitive church, an inseparable province of episcopal duty. Many ages had passed, during which this had been observed: the seminaries governed by these holy fathers, are known



historically by the name of Cathedral Schools.\* As to the alteration which led to the present order of things; it may probably have been gradual, but it does not seem to have been complete till the 13th century. It is considered to have arisen from the infelicity of the times: when prelates, being, by the necessity<sup>t</sup> of their condition, engaged in secular, political, and even military employments, were thus withdrawn from more appropriate duties;<sup>u</sup> and when,

\* La maniere d'enseigner etait encore la meme des premiere tems. [This was down to the end of the 11th century.] Les ecoles etaient dans les eglises cathedrales ou dans les monasteres: c'était l'evêque meme qui enseignait, ou sous ses ordres quelque clerc ou quelque moine distingué par sa doctrine; et les disciples, en apprenant la science ecclesiastique, se formaient en meme temps, sous les yeux de l'evêque aux bonnes moeurs et aux fonctions de leur ministere. Fleury, Disc. prefixed to the 13th vol. of the Eccl. Hist. c. 21. Il y avait de tous les temps des ecoles dans toutes les eglises cathedrales, et dans les monasteres; mais ayant été ruinés la plupart par les desordres du dixième siecle, on vint de toutes parts etudier aux villes, ou l'on trouva les meilleurs maitres, et ou l'on enseignait le plus de diverses sciences. Fleury, Institution au Droit Ecclesiastique, P. I. c. 20.

<sup>t</sup> This necessity arose from two causes: first, the ignorance of the laity; thus unfitted for all secular and civil duties, which demanded

the qualification of learning: secondly, the temporalities of the clergy; which were feudal in their tenure, and burdened with feudal obligations.

<sup>u</sup> La plupart des eveques, depuis le douzieme siecle, s'appliquaient peu a la predicattion e a l'instruction de leur clergé. Ils se laissaient accabler d'affaires temporelles. Les laiques, principalement les princes, étant entierement ignorans, ne pouvaient se passer de leur conseil. C'etaient des éveques ou des abbés, qui etaient les chanceliers et les ministres d'état; ils etaient les juges presque de toutes les affaires. Sans en chercher au dehors, leurs seigneuries temporelles n'en fournissaient que trop. Souvent ils avaient des guerres a soutenir; il fallait fortifier leurs places, et assembler leurs troupes; it fallait en tout tems de grands equipages, de grosses familles, et de toute sorte d'officiers. Au milieu de tant d'occupations, le spirituel, qui devait être le principal, etait souvent negligé: ainsi les études, la predication, et l'administration



owing to the troubled state of Christendom, it was not every episcopal see, which could afford security and tranquillity for the pursuit of learning. Recourse was thus had to some very few cities,<sup>x</sup> perhaps to only one in a kingdom: the selection being probably made, with a view to military strength, and to safety from aggression. Thus was the separate labour of each diocese, transferred to one position, which now became the common resort for clerical education: the superintendence of the bishop being transferred to the regents of various schools: and the aggregate body, of both masters and scholars, being denoted by the term *University*. For this term, according to strict propriety of use, was comprehensive of the whole body of scholars: while the schools would probably be named, respectively, after that episcopal see, to which each might severally belong.

It was thus necessary to unfold the true meaning of the word, because it seems, that a misconception of it has engendered a wrong judgment on our present question; for it has been held, that Universities received their denomination, from the *universality of the learning* which was taught in them. Thus the learned Mosheim<sup>y</sup> considers the term, as intended to denote its embracing the whole circle

des sacremens, devinrent le partage des docteurs instruits dans les universités, qui venaient de se former, comme j'ai expliqué ailleurs. Fleury, Moeurs des Chrétiens, c. 64.

<sup>x</sup> L'institution en paraissait très-utile, depuis que le malheur

des temps avait interrompu les études des églises cathedrales et des monastères. Il était plus facile d'avoir de bons maîtres dans une seule ville, comme à Paris ou à Toulouse, qu'en chaque

diocese; &c. Ibid.

<sup>y</sup> Eccl. Hist. Cent. 13, Part 2, Chap. 1, § 3.



of science : the abbé Fleury and Dr. Johnson<sup>z</sup> have fallen into a similar mistake. It would naturally follow, from this misinterpretation, that these establishments should be thought to have embraced a general regard for various orders of men, and an indiscriminate provision for them. Now such an idea may have been realized in certain ancient cities : to which, however, the name of University was never applied. Such were Athens and Alexandria : the latter of which is by Gregory Nyssen, described conformably to this notion.<sup>a</sup> But the word, in its relation to the seminaries of Paris and Oxford, denotes nothing more than the relation of a whole to its component parts.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Joignant ces quatre études principales (namely, Arts, Theology, Canon Law, and Medicine), que l'on nomma facultés, on appella le composé, *université des études* ; et enfin, simplement *université*, pour marquer qu'en une seule ville on enseignait tout ce qu'il était utile de savoir. Fleury, *Traité des Etudes*, c. 8. — (See Johnson's Dictionary, under the word University.)

<sup>a</sup> Εἰς ἣν καὶ ἡ πανταχοθεν συνέρρει νεότης τῶν περὶ φιλοσοφίαν τε καὶ ἰατρικὴν ἐσπουδακῶτων. Greg. Nyss. vol. 3, p. 540.

<sup>b</sup> Au commencement du XIII. siècle, il se forma à Paris un corps de maîtres et d'éccoliers, auquel on donna le nom d'*Université*. Il y'avait dès ce temps des maîtres en théologie. Philippe Auguste leur accorda l'an 1200 des privilèges, et les papes Innocent III., Honorius III., Innocent IV., et Alexandre IV.,

leur en donnerent. Et comme les lettres que ces papes adresserent aux maîtres et aux eccoliers, commençaient par ces mots, *Noverit universitas vestra, ou universitas magistrorum et scholarium* ; le nom d'UNIVERSITE leur en demeura. — Moreri's Dictionary, under the article "Université de Paris." The error of which I speak, has, I think, originated in the following circumstance.

The University of Paris is, in one or more papal letters of early date, designated thus : *Universitas vestra Studiorum*. (It is so stated by Mons. d'Argis, in a note upon the 20th chapter of Fleury's *Droit Ecclesiastique* : I have not myself met with the phrase in the *Bullarium*.) This has been supposed to mean, *an university, or universal system, of studies*. But it can hardly be doubted, by any one conversant in the language of that age, that the word *studium*,



I am aware of an objection, which, on a subject little understood, is likely enough to arise. It is this: that universities neither are, nor ever were, places of education exclusively clerical. I think, however, it might probably be shewn by satisfactory evidence, that this unmixed character did at first belong to them. It is true indeed, that these seminaries are, in our time, resorted to, for the qualification of the lawyer and the physician. But it is to be considered that, in the era now contemplated, these latter professions were wholly in the hands of the clergy and the monks:<sup>c</sup> the laity being, by their ignorance, disqualified for such functions; while the clergy, to whom literature was indispensable, were thus almost the only men unobscured, to some little extent, by the thick darkness that was in all the land. Again, with reference to the time, when universities were opened to men of laical prospects and designation: there are two considerations which may help to explain, how this came to pass. In the first place, generally speaking, no education was to be had, nor any preceptors to be obtained, otherwise than in these seminaries. Secondly, it is to be noted, that the clerical education had undergone a

as thus employed, has been misunderstood, and that it signifies a *school of learning*. In this sense it has a claim, perhaps questionable, to the character of pure Latinity: but I am more inclined to regard it as a barbarism, taken from the Italian word *studio*; to which this meaning properly belongs. (See the Supplementary remarks.)

<sup>c</sup> Comme il n'y avait que des clercs et des moines qui étudiaient, il n'y avait qu'eux aussi qui fussent physiciens, c'est-à-dire, medecins. Fleury, *Traité des Etudes*, c. 7. See the sequel of these words as far as the end of the following chapter.



great departure from the character, which it had in the primitive church : and this change, though infinitely pernicious to Christianity, might be thought to render an university education less unsuitable to a man of the world. I refer to the opinion, generally acted upon, as I think, since the days of Charlemagne, but certainly so in the systems of all the ancient universities : namely, that a study of the seven liberal arts was preliminarily needful, in order to qualify a theologian for entering on his own department of learning. It may readily be seen, how far this will avail towards a right view of our subject. When it was held, that logic, geometry, and astronomy, were attainments *necessary for a clergyman* ; we may readily admit the absurdity of this notion : but it was not preposterous to think, that such attainments might be *useful for a layman*. These circumstances may explain the amalgamation, which has taken place : may so explain it, I mean, as to shew, that it is a state of things, to which the usual principles of legislation, as they relate to lay corporations, cannot fitly nor reasonably be applied. If the clergy imparted to others, advantages exclusively provided for themselves : this would not confer on the civil power, a right, to overbear ecclesiastical authority on ecclesiastical matters ; to throw down the needful defences of an orthodox faith ; and even to licentiate principles of belief, which would destroy the primitive and essential use of *schools for the clergy*.

These remarks will be limited to those ancient seats of learning, which were formed after the manner now described : it is not pretended to apply



them to all modern institutions, which have been called universities. With regard then to our present subject, and to each of these ancient universities; when we claim an exemption from secular interference, our claim may be thus very briefly defended. It is urged on the one side: We wish your universities to be open to all men, without distinction of religious belief. To this it may be answered: Will you allow us any place on earth, in which to educate our clergy? If you will; we contend, that the very place which we possess, and which you desire to lay open, is precisely of this description, and of no other.

The next point for enquiry is: Whether the civil power has any rightful authority to punish the error of a religious creed. I am extremely sorry, that this should ever have been presented to the mind in the form of a question: for, if there be, relating to human duty, any axiomatical truths; truths entitled to command acquiescence, and to defy contradiction; surely this is one of them; that Christianity rigidly forbids all persecution of religious opinions. Heresy indeed is, in the eye of God, a dreadful enormity of guilt: but it is also one, which is entirely reserved to the cognizance of God. This is the unanimous and undoubted verdict of all the Christian scriptures: and their meaning, thus expounded, is, during a long tract of primitive ages, attested by concurrent echoes of Catholic and orthodox tradition.

The last question relating to this part of the subject, is the following: Whether the state has any lawful power to punish the *publication* of re-



ligious error. I answer, that it has not. If statesmen feel themselves bound by the obligations of Christianity; it is certain, that they will find in the New Testament no concession of any power, to affect with temporal inconvenience the propagators of false doctrines. The guilt and certain condemnation of such impiety are undeniable, and too great to admit of amplification: but the cognizance of them belongs to a future day; and to a tribunal, different from that of man: our general duty is to imitate the Divine perfection, which gives, even to infidels and blaspheming wretches, its rain and its sunshine: and the exceeding depravity of these men furnishes no case of warrantable exception, to the law of Christian benevolence.

But against this it will be objected: That at this rate, the good order of the world can never subsist; that the religion of the people can have no security, while it is exposed to insidious and plausible arts, to falsehood which they cannot detect, to sophistry which they cannot unravel, and to all dishonest practices, by which simple and ignorant men may be misled.

I answer, that it is not attempted to compromise the order of society: but it is thought proper to demand, that in choosing the methods to promote it, we should not consider ourselves wiser than the Almighty: that we should, therefore, recur to no methods which he has proscribed: and that our considerations of expediency should be entirely subordinate to his will, and entirely restrained within his limits.

It is not proposed to leave the religion of the people without security: but it is conceived that, in



aiming at that security, all religious persecution is as much inexpedient, impolitic, and uncondusive to the end proposed, as it is unchristian.

Christianity itself has pointed out a very different, and far more efficacious means, of securing the faith and innocency of mankind. It would accomplish this end, by securing, through its own heavenly nurture and discipline, the hearts and understandings of men, from all external seductions and impostures. Thus the dispensation of the gospel provides and enables, that the children of light shall be harmless and undefiled in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation, and in the midst of all the corruption that is in the world through sin. Such is the requirement of the Gospel; and its practicability was fully manifested in the primitive church, when the faith of the elect was not only unprotected by the civil power, but harassed and discouraged by it; and when, nevertheless, the innocence of the Christian character wore an unblemished radiance, which has rarely been equalled during the times, in which the church has been protected by the secular arm. The dangers of ignorance must be dispelled by knowledge, and the evil heart, which imbibes the temptations of unbelief, must be subdued by Christian training: these blessed instruments should *first* have done their work, before the seducer and the infidel have *their* opportunity: the efforts of the latter will then be wasted on a material, which will take no impression from them.

The right antidote may best be discovered, by searching into the root of the evil. Concerning this, I would declare my concurrence in the judg-



ment of King Charles I: of which, with some variation of statement, I will avail myself to the following effect. "The people, bred up with an insufficient teaching, and never instructed in the catechism and in the fundamental grounds of religion; are, for all the airy nourishment of such defective instruction, no better than blank table-books, ready to be filled up, either with manuals and catechisms of Popish priests, or with papers and pamphlets of Anabaptists, Brownists, and Puritans."<sup>d</sup> Heresy, according to the judgment of Tertullian, is never strong, except where faith is previously weak: the heretic owes his conquest, not to his own power, but to the feebleness of his victim.<sup>e</sup> The unlearned and unstable are they, who wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>d</sup> Collier's Eccl. Hist., vol. 2, page 724.

\* Haereses apud eos multum est, nullis viribus fuit . . . . .  
 valent, qui in fide non valent. In De quorundam infirmitatibus  
 pugna pugilum et gladiatorum, habent quod valent, nihil valen-  
 plerumque non quia fortis est, tes si in bene valentem fidem in-  
 vincit quis, aut quia non potest currant. Tertull. de Prasc. Haer.  
 vinci; sed quoniam ille qui victus c. 2. Inter Routhii Opuscula.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Peter iii. 16.



## CHAPTER XI.

ON THE SCANDAL ARISING FROM THE GREAT DIVERSITY OF RELIGIOUS OPINIONS PREVAILING AMONG CHRISTIANS.

**I**T cannot be denied, that a great hindrance, both to faith and to sanctity, has arisen from the dissensions of the Christian world. If there were but one form of belief, it would contribute a mighty help to the enlargement of the church. For there would then be, for the unconverted Pagan, a simple inquiry, respecting the truth of the gospel itself; an inquiry, unperplexed with the controversial pretensions of separate communions. An enormous scandal would also be thus put down: the weak Christian would no longer, from contemplating the phenomenon of discord, be tempted to think, that there was no possibility of discriminating the genuine from the adulterate profession, and that consequently error must be exempt from responsibility. On this topic both the friends of religion and its enemies, have expatiated: and I know not



whether it has not even been said, that there is not one doctrine of religion on which all Christians are agreed. It will be the object of a few brief remarks, to clear this allegation of its scandalizing effect ; and to show, that it does not carry with it the slightest validity, so as to militate against, either the evidence of Christianity, or the authority of the Church.

It is here necessary, in the first place, to obviate by definition, the inconvenience resulting from an undeterminate word. It is required then to fix, what is meant by *doctrines*: for it is a term of very material import in this question.

The word doctrine properly signifies, *every thing that is taught*; the present use of it however, involves a narrower signification. I deem it to be restricted to those tenets, which are at once thought to carry a greater comparative importance, and respecting which there has, by the various Christian sects, been professed a variation of judgment. Such for example are, the doctrines of the blessed Trinity; of the atonement of Christ; and of the original sinfulness of man. With respect to doctrines thus characterized; it may, I believe, be truly said, that there is not one sentence in the creeds of the church, which has not been denied or controverted, by some sect or other.

The fact is, that such sentences would never have been prescribed, unless there had been some sect, who maintained the contrary error; and yet no other course than that, of thus condemning such errors, could have been taken by the church, so long as it was faithful to the will of Christ, and duly regardful of those souls, which he



had purchased with his own blood. The existence of these variations ought therefore to be no stumbling block to the faith : it is, in reality, a strong confirmative evidence of truth. For, as it has been well argued, it was foretold that heresies would come, and the verification of prophecy is one among the proofs of religion. It is to this effect that Justin Martyr reasons, in answer to Trypho : “ You are speaking of men, who profess themselves Christians ; who acknowledge the crucified Jesus to be their Lord and their Messiah, but who teach the doctrines of deceit instead of those of Christ. Now, to us, who have learned the true and undefiled doctrine of our Saviour, the existence of these men is a strong ground for increased assurance of faith and confidence in the hope which Christ revealed. For we thus witness, in real and visible completion, the things which he foretold. For he had said, that many would come in his name : he had taught us to beware of false prophets, who would come in sheep’s clothing, but who inwardly were ravening wolves. As to schisms and heresies, and false Christs, and the great seduction of human souls ; these things were matter of prediction. Accordingly there are, and have been many, who have come in the name of Christ, and who have taught men to speak and to act, as atheists and blasphemers. From these things we learn, that Jesus had a foreknowledge of what would come to pass ; and not from these only, but from many other things also which he foretold : thus, whatever persecution we suffer, even when murdered by our own kinsmen, we know, that this is only what he



had declared beforehand : from all which we gather a full assurance, that it is impossible to deny, or to reprove, any word that was spoken by him.”<sup>g</sup> This strong reasoning may not improbably, to some minds, be enforced, by a remark which I will offer. It is manifest that Justin here refers to those words of our blessed Lord : Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ.<sup>h</sup> But it is not equally certain to me, that the exact completion of this prophecy is well understood. These words, on the just and unquestionable view of Cyril of Jerusalem,<sup>i</sup> were literally verified, in the persons of Simon Magus and Menander, each of whom professed himself to be the Messiah : the same may be said of Dositheus : I might perhaps, produce more names, if memory would serve me : and there is not a reasonable doubt, that the same character would apply to others, of whose names we have no record.<sup>k</sup> As to the general argument of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, in the beginning of his Prescription against heretics, has placed it in an instructive light : “The present state of the world,” says he, “renders it proper for me to remind you, with respect to heresies, that we ought not to wonder, either that they exist,—for they were foretold—or that they overthrow the faith of some ; for to this end are they permitted, that faith, by being tempted, may be proved. It is, therefore, a groundless and inconsiderate feeling, which actuates many of

<sup>g</sup> Dial cum Tryph. c. 35 (page 491, of the 1st vol. of Gallandii Bibliotheca).

<sup>h</sup> Matt. xxiv. 5.

<sup>i</sup> Cat. 15, c. 3 [Oxon, 1703].

<sup>k</sup> On this text, of St. Matthew, I would particularly refer the reader to the commentary of Whitby.



those who fall away from their Christian profession ; namely, because they are shocked at the prevalence of heresy." Epiphanius, after the following manner, urges the same consideration. "The present times are such, that while, in one respect, they excite our wonder, they forbid it in another. When we ourselves, in our own days, behold the words of prophecy in the form of completion, this may well justify our admiration : but when we remember, that these things were all predicted, and that they must needs have been, we must not wonder at the event. Both our Lord himself and Paul his apostle, have prophesied of these days. Let us then never perplex ourselves with asking : Why are these pestilent heresies and innovations multiplied upon us day after day ? This is to talk like ignorant men, who give no heed to the oracles of God and to the words of prophecy. When these things had been foretold, it was certain that they would come to pass."<sup>1</sup> We may remark, that our Lord himself, after predicting the appearance of false Christs and false prophets, adds : "Behold I have told you before :"<sup>m</sup> in which brief words it will hardly be doubted, that we find an intimation of that, which is thus more fully declared : "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he."<sup>n</sup> These things must make it quite clear, that the prevalence of heresy, ought to be no stumbling block to the faith, but quite the contrary. There would indeed have been a real difficulty, if the case had been otherwise : since

<sup>1</sup> Epiph. Haer, 78, c. 2.

<sup>m</sup> Matt. xxiv. 24, 25.

<sup>n</sup> John xiii. 19.



there is no subject on which the voice of Christian prophecy is more clear, and more intelligible, than in declaring the certain futurity of that, which has thus actually come to pass. It is quite true then, that there is no sect, beyond the Catholic pale, by whom all our articles of faith are admitted: for such articles would never have been prescribed, if there had not been those, by whom they were denied. The fact is, that the lawful and unavoidable use of such articles, presupposes a disagreement, and provides an antidote to the mischief.



## CHAPTER XII.

### ON THE PRACTICAL TENDENCY OF ABROGATING ARTICLES OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE.

“**L**ET no man undertake anything, of which he has not duly weighed the consequences.” This maxim is said to have saved the life of an oriental king. It may possibly be not wholly inexpedient, if we apply it to that advice which has strongly and confidently been given us, in favour of abolishing our Creeds and Articles.

As a creed is a profession of faith, and faith is a qualification for admission into the Church ; it must follow, that an abrogation of creeds must, so far as it reaches, be an abrogation of the Church. For on this footing, new members could not be received, and the existing members could not be distinguished from other men. Thus the very profession of Christianity must be at an end : since you cannot utter such a profession without a creed.

“ But this view, though it may vindicate a creed, does not go to the extent of vindicating Articles of



Faith." True : but if you would have any thing of Christianity beyond the mere name, you *must* have Articles of Faith. As to the name of Christianity ; this, if it is to be a mere mask for wickedness, can yield no benefit to mankind : yet it is quite certain, that in numberless instances, it has been nothing more. If you would ascertain the reality of a right faith ; there must be, whenever circumstances require it, a renunciation of unchristian errors, as well as a general profession of Christian truth. Of this faith, considered with relation both to the believer and the teacher, it is otherwise impossible to protect the integrity. I have already urged these considerations so much at length, that I shall claim a right to insist upon this conclusion : that an abolition of articles of faith and doctrine would in effect be, an abolition of Christianity ; and that we are therefore bound to contemplate, as the real consequences of such a measure, those same consequences, which would flow from a suppression of the Gospel.

The horror and alarm, due to such a prospect, will be felt by all religious minds : *they* will rightly estimate, in both its private and its social effect, the magnitude of that calamity, which shuts the gate of heaven, and which banishes from our present state, the hope, the direction, and the comfort of the Gospel.

But if there be minds of a different cast ; if there be those, who lightly esteem such blessings : let them not apply to their hearts a flattering unction, and imagine, that no other inconvenience will be felt, than the extinction of prayers, and of



Church ceremonials, and of ministrations for which they care not. The night which follows upon the setting of that sun, will bring on a darkness, that will be felt; that will be felt, even by the ungodly and profane. If Christianity is to sink, the constitution of England must sink with it: our civil rights have been established on this basis: the mine which is constructed under the one, must, in any fatal explosion, lay the other in the dust. Infidelity is not to be viewed as a quiescent principle, void of active propensity, and inwardly contented with its own blasphemous ruminations. If we are to contemplate a national apostacy from God, we ought to compute the consequences: we ought to prepare ourselves for anarchy, for murderous ravages and spoliations; for the removal of every barrier, which now secures property, protects weakness, and restrains oppression. We are to prepare ourselves for a revival of all the crimes, which Christianity has suppressed. If the laws will not now sanction the murder of an infant by his parents, nor of an unresisting captive by his enemy; we are to consider, that things were not always as they now are. The change ensued, only when Christianity became the law of the state: for the laws of the Roman empire were then first adapted to the Christian religion, only when Constantine had embraced the Gospel, and had learned the obligation, of framing his own decrees in subjection to the commands of God: and the later codes of other Christian nations, have been moulded, conformably to the same recognition of supremacy in Divine revelation. In like manner I may speak of the *rights of the miserable*:



they are, in truth, the rights of all men : for who, among all the sons of men, is beyond the reach of misfortune ? Of these rights the existence was not known, till Christianity taught it ; nor was it secured by human laws, till Christianity became national.<sup>n</sup> The present age is an age of ignorance and vanity, remarkably prolific of theories framed without know-

<sup>n</sup> “That same spirit of charity which, when Christianity first began to influence human laws, manifested itself in the rescue of the infant from exposure, and the gladiator from his murderous fray, which, increasing in power, as the world increased in Christian knowledge, *stamped new characters of benevolence upon the decrees of empires, and made their civil codes the evidences of their faith* ; has in this kingdom operated to an extent unknown to any other. In proof of this, an appeal might be made to those countless provisions of our statute book, which relate to the relief of the hungry, thirsty, houseless, naked, sick, imprisoned. Every description of human being, that can come within the cognizance of charity, and can be included within the denomination of a destitute, has been placed under the safeguard and superintendence of the law. Lazarus is no longer left to casual observation and an uncertain dole : he is protected by the public power, he is invested with personal rights. The legislator has become his almoner, the country is his guardian and

protector. . . . No human affliction is too small for the vigilance, nor too large for the amplitude, of its compassion. *But all this vast body of enactments, in order to be rightly understood, ought to be referred to its proper origin.* Human legislatures may have decreed, that these things should be done, and human authorities may enforce the doing of them ; but the consciousness that they *ought* to be done, and the doctrine that directs the deed, and blesses both the deed and the doer, *are from above.* . . . *The whole of this great scheme and system of charitable jurisprudence is an emanation and an evidence of our holy religion.*”—An Assize Sermon, on the Visitation of Prisoners : by the Rev. Vaughan Thomas, B.D., page 24. [Oxford. 1825.] I am sorry I am compelled, in this quotation, to abbreviate : the evidence of truth, and the right comprehension of the subject, would be better promoted by a perusal of the whole discourse from which it is taken : but I would more particularly beg the reader’s attention to the note at page 24, and to the Appendix A.



ledge : by such an age it may naturally be unknown, that our legal system, so far as we are able to trace its origin, is as much based upon God's revealed will, as that of the ancient Israelites was. But why do I insist upon this point? In order to shew, respecting all civil and international advantages which we owe to Christianity, that they must be expected to cease, whenever Christianity ceases to be professed; and that human provisions, which rose up on a recognition of the Divine will, must not be expected to endure longer, than the groundwork on which they were erected: for it is upon that groundwork that they now stand. If you seek an example, you may find a moving one in the French revolution: it is the only case in which the experiment was ever tried: let us hope it may be the last. In this instance, the legislature makes one decree, for abolishing Christianity; and another, against giving quarter in the field of battle: now this is quite consistent: Christianity being removed, it was natural that the state of war should resume those horrors and ferocities, which nothing but Christianity had subdued. The rights and liberties of mankind will, according to the modern philosophy, be differently understood, and differently treated, from what they were by those, who delineated them from the revelation of God, and sheltered them under the majesty of religion. We cannot do justice to the merits of an antichristian theory, till we have viewed it, not merely in the contemplation of its primary success, but in that of ulterior and final consequences; and that, not merely with relation to ourselves, but also to futu-



rity and to ages yet unborn. I am not now wandering from my subject: I have maintained, that a suppression of articles of faith would be a virtual abrogation of Christianity: if my arguments are valid, I am entitled to identify consequences.

But history is not wanting in precedents, which have a pointed relation to our present question, and which, therefore, cannot be otherwise than contributive to the instruction of our judgments. I would, in particular, invite attention to the following.

The ancient city of Neocesarea, in Pontus, was subject to the spiritual government of Gregory: whose name is glorious in the annals of the Church. He became bishop of this see about the year 244: finding, when he entered upon this function, only seventeen Christians in his diocese, and leaving therein, when removed from it by death, only seventeen infidels. He composed, for the use of his flock, an orthodox creed: which, as it seems, was not drawn up as a summary or abridgment of Christian doctrine, but for an antidote to heresies against the Holy Trinity. By this Creed, as we learn from Gregory Nyssen, who wrote his life, all the people of Neocesarea had, down to the time of Nyssen's writing, been instructed. In particular, Basil the Great speaks of himself to this effect: that however he might have reason to lament other things, there was at least one thing, of which he could glory; namely, that he had never had opinions of God, which were erroneous, or which he had subsequently changed; but that he had always, through his life, maintained and cherished those same apprehensions of the Divine nature, which, in his child-



hood, he had imbibed from his blessed mother and his grandmother. And again, he says that he had, from his infancy, been moulded to the faith and profession of a sound doctrine, by learning the words of the most blessed Gregory from his grandmother Macrina. But this eulogy is far surpassed by his abovenamed biographer: from whom we learn, that the Neocesareans, having, down to his time, been instructed in this very creed, had always been preserved free from all infection of heretical depravity. Thus it was that, when the Arian heresy had become widely and alarmingly scattered over the whole world, the Church of this city was wholly unpolluted with it.<sup>o</sup> It should be added, in order to make this account more intelligible, that the instruction of creeds consisted not in a mere recitation of a formulary, but in an exposition, both copious and often repeated, of its purpose and meaning.<sup>p</sup> I would insist upon this, as an evidence

<sup>o</sup> In this account of the Creed of Neocesarea, I have chiefly availed myself of particulars collected by Bull, in his *Def. Fid. Nic.*, Sect. ii., c. 12.

<sup>p</sup> The ancient use of creeds, in the system of Christian instruction, is thus represented by Augustine, as it applies to the several cases of catechumens, that is, of Christians preparing for baptism; and of Christians baptized in infancy. *Quid autem aliud agit totum tempus, quo Catechumenorum locum et nomen tenent, nisi ut audiant quae fides et qualis vita debeat esse Christiani?*

. . . . . *Quod autem fit per omne tempus, quo in ecclesia salubriter constitutum est, ut ad nomen Christi accedentes Catechumenorum gradus excipiat; hoc fit multo diligentius et instantius his diebus, quibus Competentes vocantur, cum ad percipiendum baptismum sua nomina jam dederunt.* [*Lib. de Fide et operibus, c. 9.*] The mode of instructing catechumens in the creed, as it was observed in the ancient church of Jerusalem, may be well understood from the Catecheses of Cyril. As to the case of infant baptism; the ancient form of



of the true means of giving permanency to truth. You may object: it would, in case of a false creed, be equally efficacious in support of error. But I deny the parity of the two cases. It is quite natural, that error should give way to truth: and one groundless delusion may be exchanged for another: but it is not thus with truth; it is not thus with a form of sound words, which is grounded upon reason, and propounded with explanation and evidence. Truth is thus in its natural position, well protected against the caprices of human weakness, and the changing winds of doctrine. I have not heard, for instance, respecting any doctrinal formularies prescribed by Calvin, that they have had an effect, similar to the creed of Gregory; or that they have restrained his disciples from wild and prohibited exorbitances: on the contrary, I

Christian instruction is, I think, less understood. The following words of Augustine relate to it. *Est autem catholica fides in Symbolo nota fidelibus, memoriæque mandata, quanta res passa est, brevitæ sermonis, ut incipientibus atque lactentibus, eis qui in Christo renati sunt, . . . . paucis verbis credendum constitueretur, quod multis verbis exponendum esset proficientibus, et ad divinam doctrinam certa humilitatis atque caritatis firmitate surgentibus.* With reference to these latter, he adds these remarkable words. *Tractatio fidei ad muniendum Symbolum valet; . . . . ut illa quæ in Symbolo retinentur, contra hæreticorum insidias auctoritate catholica et munitiore de-*

*fensione custodiat.* [De fide et Symbolo, c. 1.] For the better understanding of this subject, which has an important connexion with my present argument; I would recommend my reader to peruse the 5th chapter of the Abbé Fleury's *Mœurs des Chrétiens*, or the more extended information relating to the discipline of the Catechumens, which is to be found in Bingham's *Antiquities*. The last mentioned Author has a remark, which carries with it great weight, in relation to the consideration with which we are now engaged. It is to this effect; *that the ancient creeds of the Church were chiefly drawn up for the instruction and use of the Catechumens.* Antiq. x. 2, Sect. 24.



believe that Socinianism has made great progress and taken deep root among them. Who can wonder? It is much easier to lead a man into a wrong way, than to limit his deviation. I would add an illustration that may touch the heart, as much as it improves the understanding. It is thus, in words which I abbreviate, that King Charles I. describes the nurture of his early years, and lays open, at the same time, the true secret of Christian education. "From my infancy I was blest with my father's love. Among all his cares for my education, his *chief* was, to settle me right in religion. He it was who laid in me *the grounds of Christianity, which to this day I have been constant in.*"<sup>a</sup> This passes in a letter to Mr. Henderson: whom the puritanical parliament had intruded upon the king, as an instrument of conversion to Presbyterianism. Of the theological discussions which thus ensued, the issue was rather remarkable, and far from unserviceable to the cause which I maintain: it was not Mr. Henderson who converted the king, but the king who converted Mr. Henderson.

Epiphanius may supply us with a very instructive contrast to the case of Neocesarea. Among the various heresies which he describes, one is, that of the Alogians. These sectarians were so named, from their rejection of the true faith relating to the Divinity of the Word of God. They, in support of their doctrine, and conformably to other Unitarians, would mutilate the Scriptures: which

<sup>a</sup> Works of King Charles I., given in Clarendon's History of page 155. Of the discussion with the Rebellion. Mr. Henderson, a full account is



violation they carried so far, as even to reject entire books from the canon. Thus they received not either the Gospel of St. John, nor his Revelation. (Cases like this seem to imply an admission, that the authority thus denied, would, if admitted, be fatal to the children of error.) Let us now observe one of their arguments against the Apocalypse: I will give my representation from the words of Epiphanius: "Of these Alogians there are some, who, among other objections against the Apocalypse, will cavil at the following text. Their objection stands thus: 'It is written in this book, *Write unto the angel of the Church in Thyatira*: but the fact is, that there is *no* Church of Christians at Thyatira. How was it possible then, that St. John should write to a Church which does not exist?' Now it will appear respecting such objectors, that they make themselves, even by their topics of invective, unwilling witnesses to the truth which they impugn. You allege, that there is not *at this day*, any Church whatever at Thyatira: the fact is so, and it furnishes an evidence that John was a true prophet."<sup>r</sup> So far my author is sufficiently clear: as to what follows, we must make allowance for great perplexity and obscurity of discourse. With this abatement, I would represent the truth to be thus: that in Epiphanius's time, though the Pagan

<sup>r</sup> Εἰτα τίνες ἐξ αὐτῶν παλιν ἐπιλαμβάνονται τοῦτου τοῦ ῥήτου, ἐν τῇ Ἀποκάλυψει τῇ αὐτῇ. καὶ φασκουσιν ἀντιλεγοντες, "ὅτι εἶπε παλιν." "γράψον τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῇ ἐν Θυατείροις;" καὶ οὐκ ἐνὶ ἐκείνῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ Χριστιανῶν ἐν Θυατείρῃ. πῶς οὖν ἐγράφε τῇ μὴ οὐσῇ;" καὶ εὐρισκονται οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἑαυτοὺς ἀναγκάζοντες, ἐξ αὐτῶν ὧν κηρυττοῦσι κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας, ὁμολογεῖν. εἰ γὰρ εἰπῶσιν, "οὐκ ἐνὶ ΝΥΝ ἐκκλησία ἐστὶν ἐν Θυατείρᾳ;" δεικνύουσι πεπροφητευκεναὶ τὸν Ἰωάννην. Adv. Haer. 51, c. 33.



persecution was at an end, and Christianity was now the public religion of the Empire ; Thyatira was no longer a Christian city : it had lapsed into a succession of heresies, till the light of the gospel became quite extinct and Paganism revived. Now the judgment denounced upon this city was provoked by heresy : and the bishop of it is rebuked, because he had not put those heresies to silence. You see then the state of the case : the heresies were those, which asserted the lawfulness of fornication and idolatry : these heresies cannot be renounced, without articles of faith : the neglect of the bishop is the subject of Divine rebuke : and the existence of heresies is, in the issue, followed by an extinction of the Christian faith. If then we do not here witness an awful judgment, we may at least find reason for salutary reflection : it may give occasion to consider, whether there be not, in heresy itself, an inherent tendency of sure destruction to every Church, which does not repel it from communion : like a subtle poison within the body, working the consummation of death with no less certainty, than the most violent shock from without. It will be well to close these remarks with the words of holy writ. “ And unto the Angel of the Church in Thyatira write : These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass ; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works, and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to



seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And *I will kill her children with death*; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”<sup>s</sup>

Let us now bestow some little attention on a dark epoch of our own country. The following narrative is framed on the authority of a respectable historian of the English Church.

It appears that, shortly after the murder of King Charles I., a measure was adopted for abolishing, with little reservation, all distinctions of creed and doctrine. Fairfax and the army published a certain paper, entitled, *An Agreement of the People*. This document is described, as having given a dangerous liberty to all persuasions. In point of comprehension, it seems to have included Anabaptists, Antinomians, Arians, Socinians, and in short almost all possible varieties of doctrine, professedly Christian. It is noted, most appropriately with relation to our present subject, that this manifesto, while it makes Christianity to be the public profession of the nation; nevertheless *abstains from defining Christianity, and does not distinguish it from other religions*. So much for this military edict, considered in itself. As to legislative authority, it seems to have had that of the people, who then



called themselves the parliament, and who, with relation to it declare, "that an expedient should be found out, for the admitting all such churches as tend to godliness."<sup>r</sup> We are now to mark the consequences. "Upon the strength of these indulgences," says Collier, "the office of preaching was sometimes invaded by the laity, and strange flights of enthusiasm and frenzy [were] thrown out for prophecy." Our historian gives the following example of his meaning. At Walton-upon-Thames, a soldier, coming into the church with a candle and lantern, and being refused leave to hold forth there; went into the churchyard, and told the people that he had had a vision, and had received a command from God; which he was to deliver, and by which they, under pain of damnation, were to govern themselves. It consisted, as he told them, of five lights: first, that the Sabbath was abolished; secondly, that tithes were abolished; thirdly, that ministers were abolished; fourthly, that magistrates were abolished. As to what he calls his fifth light; he pulls a Bible out of his pocket, holds it up to the people, and then goes on to the following effect: "Here is a book; you have it in great veneration. It consists of two parts, the Old and New Testament. I must tell you, it is abolished. It contains beggarly elements, milk for babes. But now Christ himself is in glory among us, and imparts to his saints a fuller measure of light than this book can afford. I am therefore commanded to burn it before your faces." Upon this, he set fire to the leaves, and then, putting out the candle, let them

<sup>r</sup> See the whole Narrative in Collier's Ecclesiastical History.



know, that his fifth light was extinguished.——  
 Now I will beg you to observe, that the narrative so far gives no more than a *specimen* of the results, which flowed from this abrogation of creeds. As to its general influence upon national manners; we may notice what follows. It may, in a case like this, be esteemed a trifling incident, though expressly noticed as a result of this measure, that a petition was presented to the legislature, for taking off some of the restraints of property, for abolishing the obligation of rent, and for making the produce of land common to all who would cultivate it. The real amount of national wickedness may be best estimated, by a law, which passed soon after the above-named charter of doctrinal comprehension: but not, I presume, before it was wanted: for laws of this kind are not usually anterior to the depravity which they restrain. I will speak of it in the very words of my historian. “By another act made this summer, against atheistical, blasphemous, and execrable opinions; *the reader may collect the declension of morality, and the lamentable condition to which belief and practice were now reduced.* In this pretended statute it is enacted, amongst other things, that if any person shall profess, ‘that the acts of adultery, drunkenness, swearing, and the like open wickedness, are, in their own nature, as holy and righteous, as the duties of prayer, preaching, or giving thanks to God; or whosoever shall avowedly profess, that happiness consists in the commission of such crimes; that there is really no such thing as righteousness or sin, independent of conscience and opinion; that there is neither heaven



nor hell ;' with some other *blasphemies too horrid to be inserted* ; if any person shall be convicted of maintaining such frightful doctrine ; they were to suffer six months imprisonment for the first, and be banished for the second offence, and, in case they returned without leave, were to be treated as felons." Such are the fruits of abolishing articles of faith and doctrine : First, you have a condition of human life, demoralized to an extent which is dreadful to contemplate and horrid to describe : Secondly, you have a practical admission, which it deeply concerns you not to overlook ; that new articles of doctrine are imposed by the same men, who had abrogated the old ones : this being attended moreover by a circumstance, which every honest and enlightened Christian would strongly deprecate ; namely, that the new imposition of doctrine is enforced by legal penalties. It is thus that visionary and conceited men can be taught, by nothing but experience, to understand the true tendency of their own chimeras.

I feel myself therefore entitled to insist upon the ground which I have taken up, and to maintain, respecting the project before us, that the consequences must eventually be the same with those of rejecting Christianity. I appeal to common sense. One man denies the unity of the Godhead : another denies the doctrine of the blessed Trinity : one denies the Divinity of Christ : another denies his humanity : one proclaims the lawfulness of idolatry, and another denies all the obligations of Christian morality : one denies the resurrection of the body, and another denies the judgment of the



world to come : while proceeding at this rate, let us consider, how much of Christianity shall we have left at the end ? But all these tenets now enumerated, and many others of equal repugnancy to Scripture ; are doctrines *of various denominations of Christians*. We shall therefore at least have the name of Christianity. A mighty consolation ! to have the name, when we have nothing more : the name, on this view, can be nothing more than a mask for an infidel. And how can you possibly prevent this result ? One man has as much right to his mispersuasion as another : he has as much right to all these mispersuasions, as he has to one of them : and the offer of salvation is, according to some men, indiscriminately made to Christians of all denominations. Vincentius Lirinensis has put this matter in its true light. “ If you only once open the gate to this unprincipled compromise ; I shudder at the magnitude of danger which must ensue : it is nothing less than that *of totally destroying and eradicating Christianity*. For after any one doctrine has been denied, another and another, time after time, will have the same fate : this will be nothing more than following the precedent and carrying out the principle. At last, *when every part has been separately removed, what other than this can be the issue, namely, that the whole will be gone.*”<sup>s</sup>

<sup>s</sup> Si semel admissa fuerit haec impiae fraudis licentia, horreo dicere, quantum EXSCINDENDAE ATQUE ABOLENDAE RELIGIONIS periculum consequatur. Abdicata enim qualibet parte catholici dogmatis, alia quoque atque item alia, ac deinceps alia et alia, jam quasi ex more et licito abdicantur. Porro autem, SINGULATIM PARTIBUS REPUDIATRIS, QUID ALIUD AD EXTREMUM SEQUITUR, NISI UT TOTUM PARITER REPUDIETUR ? Commonitorii c. 23.



I now trust that enough has been said, in defence of this position : That the maintenance of Christianity demands, not only a general profession of its truth, but also, all such other specific and explicit professions, as may be needful for securing it, in its natural and essential separation from every false religion, which may be disguised under the name of it.

I will add a few words respecting those, who would have no bond of union among Christians, other than a mere acknowledgment of the authority of Holy Scripture. I appeal then to the matters now submitted : and I will not scruple, on the ground of various considerations thus occurring, to declare my opinion ; that when the Creeds are once abrogated, the Bible will soon be dismissed.



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Lancaster, Thomas William

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